THE MASTER OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET

OLGA RACSTER

Pavlova en travestie

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The Master of the Russian Ballet

Cav Enriço Cecchetti.

[*Frontispiece.*

The Master of the Russian Ballet :: (*The Memoirs of Cav. Enrico Cecchetti*) *By Olga Racster*

With an Introduction by ANNA PAVLOVA

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INTRODUCTION

BY

ANNA PAVLOVA

My dear Maestro,

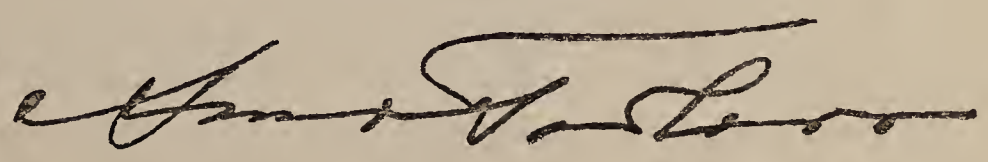
How happy I am to write a few words of preface to this book about you.

The feeling of deep gratitude I have for what you have taught me is blended with my love and respect for your personality.

In an age when people no longer understand that to teach others it is necessary first to work hard and long oneself, and to have an actual experience of the stage; when by the aid of self-advertisement anyone can take the name of "professor"; when schools are opened at random where pupils are taught anything except the art of dancing—you, with infinite patience and loving care, have honestly and modestly pursued the great work of inculcating your pupils with the covenants of true art.

When you finished your brilliant career as the first dancer of your day, you devoted your life to the difficult art of teaching others, and with what proud satisfaction you can now look round, for, in every part of the world, nearly all who have made a name for themselves in choreography at the present time have passed through your hands.

If our goddess Terpsichore is still in our midst, you, by right, are her favoured high priest. Guard, dear Maestro, for many long years to come, the sacred fire burning on the altar of our great goddess, and teach your pupils to treasure the divine sparks, carrying them to the furthermost corners of the earth as they speed on their way.



London, August 10th, 1922.

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ADDRESS PRESENTED TO ENRICO CECCHETTI BY THE RUSSIAN COLONY IN LONDON ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEBUT

DEAR MAESTRO,

You no doubt know that there is not a country in the world, except perhaps your own, that knows how to honour an artist with so much warmth as Russia.

All we Russians to-day join together to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your public career ; it is with sorrow one has to confess that the terrible misery in which Russia has been plunged prevents us from greeting you on the stage of the theatre where the successes of your ardent youth, your plastic maturity, and your old age, full of freshness, took place—that theatre which is as dear to us as it is to you, because it belongs to us and it registers for us the spot where you passed the best years of your career.

I beg all who are present, and, above all, you yourself, Maestro, to make an effort of imagination. Let us assume that standing round us here to-night there is not only M. Diagilev's company, but also that all the artists of Petrograd and Moscow, and of the provinces of Russia, are here. It is not possible to record in such a short time all the compliments that would be paid you if you were standing on the stage of the Marie Theatre, surrounded by several generations of dancers, created by you ; representatives of the world of art and music in Russia, who mingle their sense of gratefulness for your great work in art, with the applause of the general public. But I feel sure that their words will exhale their enthusiasm and the sincere love which they feel for you. In the same way as we in the past have honoured the artists of our own theatre, we congratulate you as an adopted son of our soil, just as dear, just as much loved as our own children. It is also impossible for me to recall in a few words the large field of your activities as an artist in Russia. For that it would be necessary to go back to the annals of the theatre some fifty years. But I must add a few words to what I have already said. The secret of that eternal

youth which you offer to Terpsichore is full of the unquenchable "soffio divino," and an inspiration which defies the onslaught of time.

As the rays of your genius have served to illuminate the way for generations of artists in Russia who have been your pupils, we Russians, living in London, come here to-night to honour you as a representative of the theatre where your name is written in letters of gold on the tablets of the history of Russian Art. Glory and honour to you, Enrico Cecchetti, veteran of the Russian stage, beloved of a multitude of habitués of the Marie Theatre, in which direction our thoughts must fly on the occasion of the jubilee of one of its tribe of artists.

London, January 5th, 1922.

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THE MASTER OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET

THE MEMOIRS OF CAV. ENRICO CECCHETTI

CHAPTER I

SHOULD you be walking along the upper part of Shaftesbury Avenue in the early part of any morning in the year, you will be sure to meet an alert, rotund, little man, whose step has the spring of youth in it, and whose blue-grey eyes look at you keenly from beneath the brim of his hat. If you have any reason to speak to him in English he will reply with difficulty, but if you address him in Italian you will receive a quick and courteous answer, for Enrico Cecchetti, though he has lived much in England, has never mastered the English language.

An indomitable enthusiast in dancing, this veteran of seventy-three refuses to grow old. He was dancing in the 'sixties, the 'seventies, the 'eighties, and the 'nineties, and it was on January 5th, 1922, that he celebrated his jubilee by taking the part of the Wicked Fairy in the "Sleeping Beauty" at the Alhambra. It was an occasion of great enthusiasm, wreaths and addresses were presented to the smiling overwhelmed Cecchetti, as he stood surrounded by the *corps de ballet* and leading *danseuses:* Mesdames Lopokova, Trefilova, Spessiva, Egorova and Tchernicheva. All

the artists present were his pupils, and went daily to his school to exercise and receive instruction under his watchful eye.

In his youth Enrico Cecchetti himself had belonged to the ranks of great dancers. Good-looking, extraordinarily agile and excessively graceful; trained in the traditions of La Scala, then renowned for the finest technique in the world, Cecchetti made a name for himself as *premier danseur* in England, Europe and America.

After many years in Petrograd at the Imperial Marynski Theatre as *primo ballerino*, *second maître de ballet*, and professor at the Imperial School of Ballet, Cecchetti became director of the Imperial School of Ballet at Warsaw, where his influence and knowledge were badly needed. There he wrote and produced many of his ballets, and gave to the Polish dancers a technique which put life into their natural gifts. But the nostalgia for Russia drew him back to Petrograd, and there he came into contact with Serge Diagilev, and for twelve years devoted himself to the training of the Russian Ballet, which has been the delight of English audiences. He was the master of the whole *corps de ballet*, and in addition he has a host of famous dancers to his credit. His pupils include Anna Pavlova, to whom he exclusively devoted himself for three years, Lydia Lopokova, Anna Sedova, Olga Preobrajenska, Lydia Kyasht, Luba Tchernicheva, Luba Egorova, Cecilia Cherri, Vera Trefilova, Tamara Karsavina, Luigi Albertieri, Leon Woizikovsky, Stanislas Idzikovsky, Alexandre Gavrilov, Leonide Massine, Stanislas Nijinsky, and many others.

No artist has ever been more grateful to Cecchetti for his teaching than Madame Pavlova, and no master has ever been more proud of her recognition of his knowledge than he. But, as he always says: "It

was not I who taught her ; she was guided by her own genius ! ”

In his London studio Cecchetti reigns supreme, and the affection of his pupils is quite touching. The moment he enters the door, they flock to him and each one embraces him as though he were their father. With a small cane in his hand he sits at the end of the room, whistling a tune and tapping out the rhythm on the floor, while his pupils dance before his watchful eye. Not an error passes him, and if he thinks a fault cannot be explained in any other way, he jumps up with youthful alacrity and goes through the figure himself. Then it is one gets a glimpse of the superb dancer, for, in spite of his years, his skill is unimpaired.

At the outbreak of the war Cecchetti was in Italy visiting his sons, who are married and settled there. Then came the Russian *débâcle*. It was impossible to return. His house in Petrograd had been left in charge of a faithful servant, and for a time he sent money to a friend to pay rent and expenses. Then all communications were stopped, and his home, full of mementos of his career, pictures and presents from royalties, books and engravings—all that he prized—is entirely lost to him.

It was in the evenings, after his long day's work, that Enrico Cecchetti sat in his London flat and recalled the events of his career for the benefit of these memoirs. With the scent of flowers in the room—the gift of some famous dancer—we talked, while Madame Cecchetti knitted small garments for her grandchildren in Italy, and Mami, the black cat, fixed her green eyes upon us from a dark corner, apparently absorbed in the story of her master's life.

* * * * * *

"Cradled in Art"

The phrase accurately describes the setting of Enrico Cecchetti's birth, for he made his debut into the world at the Tordinona Theatre, in Rome, on June 21st, 1850. How he felt on that day he whimsically confesses he cannot recall, but he veritably arrived in an age of great dancers. Marie Taglioni, with her marvellous technique and no particular looks, Fanny Elssler, with less knowledge and much beauty, had become famous. Carlotta Grisi had astounded the world in "Giselle," the work of three famous men, Heinrich Heine, Théophile Gautier and Adolf Adam. Eminent composers and poets had begun to recognize the part which music could play in the ballet. Beethoven had acknowledged it in "Prometheus," Mozart had scored his ballet "Les Petits Riens"—frequently played on the concert platform in these days as a suite—for the great *maître de ballet* Noverre, and the golden period of dancing had been started in England at the King's Theatre, now His Majesty's.

Cecchetti's mother was Serafina Casagli, a *prima ballerina* in her day; his father, Cesare Cecchetti, was a leading dancer and *maître de ballet*. He had danced in the same theatre with Taglioni, and often told his son how he had seen Taglioni's father giving her lessons. The length of her arms was his despair.

"What can I do with them?" he would exclaim irritably to his obedient pupil. "Lower them, fold them, cross them! Heavens!"

Taglioni *père* invented many poses to make the arms appear shorter; they were an assistance to her, but

they have often been used by *danseuses* to whom Nature has been kinder, and who therefore did not require them.

It was from his father, too, that Cecchetti heard the story of Marie Taglioni's marriage to Count Gilbert de Voisins in 1832. He left her almost the day after, and twenty years later they met at a dinner given by the Duc de Morny in Paris. The great Rachel was also present. Voisins arrived after everybody was seated at table. He looked across at Marie Taglioni, and asked his neighbour: "Who is that she-professor seated beside Morny?"

"That is your wife," was the reply.

Voisins thought for a moment, then he remarked: "It is quite possible!"

At the other end of the table Taglioni asked the Duc de Morny why he had invited her to dine in such bad company. After dinner Voisins begged to be presented to Taglioni. She consented, and when Morny introduced Voisins, remarked naïvely: "I fancy, monsieur, I had the honour of being presented to you in 1832!"—the year of their marriage.

Alas, poor Marie Taglioni! She rose to the heights and descended to the depths, for she died in Marseilles in great poverty and very old.

Cecchetti humorously insists that he was twice baptized. During the first two days after his birth he showed but the faintest signs of life. On the third he breathed normally; on the fourth he was hurried off to the Church of Santa Salvatore to be baptized. The ceremony was in progress when a messenger rushed in, saying that Madame Cecchetti was dying, and she must see her son for a last embrace. So the infant was hastily carried back to the house, received his mother's kisses, then taken at once to the church again for baptism. The ceremony over, it was found that

Madame Cecchetti was better, and she lived to see her son well launched in his career.

In all their travels in Italy Enrico accompanied his mother and father, and as soon as he could walk he poked inquisitively round the theatres where his parents were dancing. It was a terrible knock-about life for a child, and he was not free from illness. Once they arrived at Ancona when the cholera was raging. People were being rushed off to the hospitals. One night the poor child awoke, stiff and blue and huddled. His mother, terrified lest he should be taken from her and carried off to the hospital, covered him with her body to screen him and warm him. She dosed him with oil and lemon, and, after a prolonged struggle, cured him. Croup, colds, rheumatism, attacked him from time to time.

When he was five years old, Cecchetti's parents were fulfilling an engagement at Genoa. Amongst the ballets there was Giuseppe Rota's famous "Il Jocatore." The story had to do with a gambler who had risked all and lost all. Back from the gaming-table he came to his house, into the room where his wife and child were sleeping. He entered cautiously, and searched for all that remained of the family jewels. The wife watched him silently, then, just as he turned to make a last effort to reinstate the family fortunes, she entreated him not to go. She pleaded earnestly without effect, and as a final appeal took the child and laid it across the threshold. The father, torn between affection and his desire to recover his lost money, stood irresolute for a moment, then picked up his son and heir and threw it to the mother, who caught it in her arms. The part of the wife was played by Signorita Santalicante, one of the most noted *prima ballerinas* of her day, and Cecchetti was the child. After he had been thrown from one parent to the

other, his part in the performance was to weep. One night he cried in real earnest. Santalicante failed to catch him, and he fell on the stage, bumping his nose so hard that it bled. His tears created a furore, and the audience insisted on repeated curtain calls. Nothing so natural had been seen for many a day! Of course, everyone behind the scenes was most anxious, and begged him not to cry.

"H-h-how c-can I h-h-help crying?" he sobbed.

"Where does it hurt most?"

"N-no-w-where?"

"Then what is the matter, little one?"

Between sobs and sniffs, it was discovered that Enrico was not crying because of his fall, but on account of a great disappointment. In the next act he always went on in the guise of a monkey, mounted on the back of a bear. There was a magician who produced, amongst other things, a big dish, from which he lifted the cover and released a number of little birds. Cecchetti always managed to catch one, but that night, owing to his bruises and his bleeding nose, he could not put on his monkey's garb, and consequently could not enjoy the sport of seizing a bird. And so he sat and wept for his lost opportunity.

Giuseppe Rota, the author of the ballet, was one of the friends to whom Cecchetti's father was greatly attached. His career had been a series of extraordinary incidents, which prove the saying that "genius will out." Very poor and friendless, he started as a humble member of the *corps de ballet* in his native town of Venice. Though he occupied such a third-rate position, he had dreams of writing ballets, and all his spare time he spent in setting them down on paper. One of the ballets put on by the management during the season proved a dreadful fiasco. There was much tribulation and tearing of

hair. Nothing else was ready to take its place. Rota, dancing in the shades of the *corps de ballet*, took courage and called on the Director.

"Would the Signor read a ballet of mine, 'Il Fornaretto'?" The manuscript was taken, *faute de mieux*, and, as luck would have it, it was read, and, still better, the Director approved of it. He called Rota, and told him that if he liked to put it in rehearsal at once, he could do so, the management would provide everything necessary.

Rota left the manager's office wearing his accustomed grey suit, stained and discoloured by the sun. The idea of his going to the theatre and rehearsing the big artists in such clothes appalled him. Of course, they would sneer at him, especially as he had come from the *corps de ballet!* For three days he remained in his lodgings. Then he emerged in a neat black suit, clean and correct, and went about his business of rehearsing at the theatre. Those who had known him before treated him with deference, and the big artists took him for a well-to-do young man, who in all probability would make a name.

Only the spider in Rota's attic knew how an old grey suit had been dyed black, and *he* didn't say a word.

After his first ballet Rota never went back. His work grew more and more popular, for he had novel ideas of choreography, and a new way of making a happy combination of colours. The success of "Il Fornaretto" was prodigious and lasted for years. "Il Jocatore," another of his noted productions, in which Cecchetti had the hazardous toss from father to mother, was much desired by managers, and if they could not afford to buy it—well, the laws of copyright did not exist where ballets were concerned. It was Cecchetti's father who practically "jumped" "Il

Fornaretto" for a manager at Turin. He had seen it at Genoa, and knew it well, and he had also danced in it.

"You know 'Il Fornaretto'?" asked the manager.

"Very well indeed!"

"I would like you to put it on here!"

"I should be delighted, but we must get Signor Rota's permission."

"Never mind that. Make some little change, and then he won't be able to say anything."

"I'll change the name, that's all."

The manager agreed; the title of "Il Fornaretto" was altered to "Lorenzo Barbo," and rehearsed by Cecchetti's father. Telegrams and letters went off to Rota, informing him of what was happening to his ballet in Turin. The night came, the public was enthusiastic, and in a box close to the stage sat Rota and his manager from Genoa. There were calls for the artists, clapping and shouts for the *maître de ballet*. Cecchetti's father walked out with dignity and pointed to the box where Rota sat. "There is the author!" he said, and, of course, the excitement was doubled and the applause unceasing until Rota himself bowed.

After the curtain was down and quiet was restored, Rota turned to Cecchetti's father and shook him warmly by the hand. "Ah, Cecchetti, so it is you who have put on 'Il Fornaretto'?"

Cecchetti shook his head. "Oh, no; I have put on 'Lorenzo Barbo'!"

Rota laughed and highly complimented him, and there was hardly a ballet of his that Cecchetti did not put on in the years that followed. The incident used to be a standing joke between him and Rota, and often the latter said: "Cecchetti, I want you to go to ——, and put on ——." And Cecchetti, frequently not knowing the ballet, would say so.

"You don't know it? That doesn't matter; put it on as you did 'Il Fornaretto'," Rota replied.

At this date one of the most popular artists in Italy was Ronsani. He was a beautiful dancer, a man of temperament and gifts. One of his celebrated rôles was in a ballet called "The Orphan of Geneva," in which he created a huge sensation by walking up a high flight of stairs, falling backwards and rolling downwards head foremost. In addition to being a great artist, Ronsani was a man of business. He was the first impresario to take a troupe of Italian ballet dancers to America—no small undertaking in those days, considering the long journey and the rough methods of travel. However, there were plenty who were willing to see what the country of Lincoln looked like, and quite a large company was organized.

Cecchetti's father and mother and a fine dancer, Filippo Baratti, were in the company; also Enrico Cecchetti, aged five. They were many weeks crossing the Atlantic, and amongst the travelling adventures in America there was an exciting "hold up" on the frozen Mississippi. There were only three passenger boats at that date, and for fifteen days the vessel which was carrying the Italian company of dancers to St. Paul was ice-bound. One of the features of American theatrical life at that time was the itinerant floating theatres, or show-boats, which visited small settlements on the banks, and drew audiences into the stuffy cabin to witness performances of plays. Although there had originally been a great deal of Puritanical opposition to a theatre of any kind, and theatres were neither clean nor well-lighted, great artists had come from Europe and England, and managers had found America a fruitful land for the entertainer. The incomparable Fanny Elssler had visited the Park Theatre in New York, and taken the

town by storm with her dancing. Mario had sung at Castle Garden, and while Cecchetti was there, Adelina Patti was singing in concerts—three years later to make her debut in opera in New York. Rachel was playing before audiences that were—according to the record of a member of her company—" obviously bored with Corneille, turning over their translations in concert as if a regiment in black uniform was executing a military order." Such tragedy was not to the taste of the public, which was ignorant of the greater tragedy which was being enacted behind the scenes. Rachel's brother was managing for her, and, being harassed by poor returns at the box office, tried to cut down expenses. He omitted to warm the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, and poor Rachel, shivering in the wings in a temperature of forty degrees, caught a violent cold, which resulted in pneumonia. She recovered sufficiently to give a performance of " Adrienne Lecouvreur " at Charlestown, South Carolina, her last on any stage. Returning to Europe, she died at her villa in Cannes.

In those days Italy was famed for her dancers and her ballets, and though Cecchetti insists that there is no nationality in the technique of dancing, because there is only one great technique—that is, the classical technique which is everywhere—the best dancers were Italian. As Cecchetti was so young, he had no rôle assigned him in Ronsani's ballets, but he was much petted by everybody, and permitted to wander about the stage at will. His greatest interest was then centred in the lighting arrangements—mostly gas and oil lamps. One night, at Baltimore, he contributed to the excitement of Ronsani's performance by taking a hand in the stage effects. In a certain ballet in which Ronsani danced, a great sensation—for those days—was made by the scene changing from day to

night. Often and often Cecchetti had enviously watched the man in the wings turning certain gas taps to create the required effect. One night the man was absent from his post! But Cecchetti was eagerly watching the ballet and all that was happening on the stage.

Ronsani, dancing before a crowded house, came to the moment when blackness should descend upon the scene. He cast his eyes in the direction from whence the artificial workings of Nature should proceed.

"Notte, notte!" ("Night, night!") he whispered. Nothing happened. The gas lights still did their uttermost to give the appearance of the sun high in the heavens.

"Notte, notte!" he called, in louder tones. Cecchetti saw his opportunity. He flew to the gas taps. At last he could touch those precious knobs of brass. He seized them and turned, and turned! Tableau! Ronsani was blacked out; not only that, the whole house was plunged in darkness and confusion!

What followed Cecchetti's first attempt at a lighting scheme has not been unfolded by him, but he admits that after that performance he was not quite so welcome behind the scenes.

Many years later, when Cecchetti went to America with Madame Pavlova, the memories of his boyhood came to him. Though the towns were obviously much changed, he could remember the theatres and where they stood. In Baltimore he returned to the very stage where he had manipulated the gas taps in his desire to aid Ronsani, and viewed the formidable array of electric switches on the switchboard. At Louisville, now a handsome modern city, he recalled how, in his youth, big rats used to run about the streets every night. They emerged at a certain hour, like cats, and returned to their lairs with the dawn. It

was here, too, that as a child he lived at an hotel, where there was a huge, long table capable of seating quite a hundred people. The issue of the struggle about slavery was in abeyance, and negroes were not yet free. The dining-room at Louisville had two doors at the end of the room leading to the kitchen. At a word of command they flew open, and a small regiment of black waiters would march in like soldiers, one behind the other. At another word of command they halted and turned, then each took a plate away and replaced it with another. Again a word of command, and they marched out, the doors closing behind them.

There were many good artists in Ronsani's company. In addition to Filippo Baratti and Cecchetti's father and mother, it included the gifted Pratese family, which consisted of father and mother, two sons, also two daughters, one of whom was named Josephine. Being a good Catholic she always celebrated the *jour de fête* of her patron saint, Joseph. When, during the American tour, the day approached, Josephine's father prepared for a feast, to which all the members of the company were to come. He scoured the town for Italian delicacies, and decided that a *Risotto à la milanaise* should be the *pièce de résistance* of the meal. With much care as to selection he bought the meat with which to make the gravy, the rice, the tomatoes, the parmesan with which to make the palatable dish. Finally, after endless search and trouble, he procured four precious truffles, which were to give the crowning touch of perfection.

"We will think ourselves back in Italy," he told the invited guests. "You shall have *Risotto à la milanaise*." With jaunty step he returned to the hotel carrying the truffles. He put them on a plate on the table, and, after viewing them with delight, went to a rehearsal at the theatre.

Everyone chattered about the feast which was to bring the atmosphere of Italy to America for a few hours, and Pratese, having completed his work at the theatre, went back to his hotel.

Ah, he would just have one more look at the truffles ! But . . . ! where were they ? Well, there are some things that make life bitter ! THE TRUFFLES WERE GONE !

" The devil ! " said Pratese, as he searched the rooms from end to end. " What has become of my truffles ? " He rushed into the corridor, and there saw Sam, the negro who acted as chamber-maid.

" Have you been doing my room ? " Pratese asked him.

Sam, with a clear conscience grinned. " Yaas, sah ! I jus' bin thar ! I done gone turned out the smell ! "

" What ? "

" Them mighty ole 'taters on the plate ! I throwed 'em away ! Yass, sah ! Shure ! "

The name of Pratese was for many years well known in London, for the grandson of the victim to negro cleanliness was *maître de ballet* at the Hippodrome.

From America Cecchetti's father went to Turin, where he was engaged to produce four ballets a year at the Theatre Victor Emmanuel. At that time the conception of a ballet was on very different lines to what it is to-day. The idea of music written to suit the steps of the dancer, instead of the steps of a dancer being inspired by music, was general. Cecchetti's father followed the well-worn lines of getting a story, writing the choreography, and then finding someone to put music to it.

Turin had a gifted composer just then called Luigi Mardoglio, and Cecchetti's father sought him out to compose the music he wanted. But the proposition was not an easy one. Mardoglio was the type of man

that Mürger would have taken for his "Vie de Bohème," had he known him. He dearly loved his ease, he was temperamental, uncertain, and found his inspiration, like Glück, when the cork was out of the bottle. The great point about him, in Cecchetti's estimation, was his power to write the sort of music he wanted, if approached at the right moment. So, being shrewd, he followed Mardoglio about the town, and when he found him at a restaurant at a convivial stage of a meal he would thrust a piece of music paper before him and make him write. Later the following arrangement was arrived at. Cecchetti sent for Mardoglio's son, and said: "I will give you five francs a day on condition that you bring your father here to my house every morning to write the music for my ballets. He shall have three bottles of wine a day placed for his use on the piano." The offer was accepted, and every day Mardoglio was locked in a room in Cecchetti's house with a piano, music paper, and three bottles of wine, till the music was completed.

Cecchetti's father wrote and produced many ballets, amongst them one called "The Miller," into which he introduced little wooden xylophones. They were a novelty at that time, and the *corps de ballet* did not know how to play them. Young Cecchetti, inquisitive, and anxious to see everything and do everything, got a xylophone and quickly learnt how to play it. At rehearsals he was called upon to teach the others. Victor Emmanuel, at that time King of Piedmont, bluff, hearty and good-natured, constantly wandered in and out of the theatre at Turin while Cecchetti's father was conducting rehearsals. He always dressed like a huntsman, and always talked patois. One morning he came upon a rehearsal at which the small Cecchetti was teaching the big members of the *corps de ballet* how to play the xylophone.

"Come here," said the King, beckoning to the boy.

Cecchetti went to the box.

"How did you learn to play that instrument?"

"With my hands," was the precocious reply, at which the King laughed, as a King should.

Those were stirring days for a child to live in, in Italy. Cries of "Freedom!" "Regeneration!" "Independence!" were resounding. Turin was full of troops in 1859, when Sardinia obtained Lombardy from Austria, and later there was the overpowering personality of Garibaldi, like a flame in the air.

There was no necessity for boys to go to books for stories of adventure; they were surrounded by it, and of course young Cecchetti, like the rest, ran about the town fired with the desire to fight. Most times he lost his way, and caused endless anxiety to his mother.

"I want to go and fight," he pleaded.

"Wait a little, and we will go together," his father replied, knowing that a direct refusal would only mean antagonism on the part of his son.

The longing to fight increased by glimpses of the great people of the day. In 1860 Cecchetti received a never-to-be-forgotten impression of Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel and Napoleon III., riding side by side at the head of the Italian troops. Garibaldi was a big, loosely-built man. His face was pock-marked, his feet and hands excessively large. He had an air of recklessness, which contrasted strongly with the handsome gallantry of Victor Emmanuel, and even more strongly with the shifty appearance of Napoleon III. It was after the battle of Castlefidarto, which, in the same way as Waterloo decided the fate of France, brought the abasement of Papal temporal power.

The effect of all these dramatic happenings in the history of Italy upon the ever-cherished ballet of the country was very evident. Historic subjects were

chosen. Cecchetti's father wrote a big ballet, "Christopher Columbus," which he produced in Florence. This he followed with "The Mysteries of Paris," in which he gave his son a small part.

And so time went on, and Cecchetti every day grew in his desire to become a soldier—or—a dancer.

CHAPTER II

IT was borne in upon Cecchetti's father and mother about this time that their son ought to go to school. Normally boys seem to be divided into two sections: those who long to go to school, and those who don't. Enrico Cecchetti belonged to the latter class. He wanted to imbibe knowledge from life, and not to get it out of books; more than anything he wanted to dance. He was sturdy, he was ruddy, he was audacious, no school life could attract him. "You don't understand," said his father. "You must go," said his mother, and go he did, to a school at Fermo.

Well, according to his own accounts, he was a dunce. There was nothing in the way of stereotyped learning that could hold him. Most of the time he was occupied in doing pirouettes—for which, by the way, in after life he was famous. Over and over again, when he ought to have been preparing his lessons, he was leaping and twirling about the schoolroom, more than often falling on the ground, in his attempts to execute one of the most difficult figures in ballet dancing. He never knew his lessons, and when he went to church he never knew his prayers. "My best lessons were learnt," says he, "out of life and Nature, out of gravel stones and stars." The school at Fermo was tolerated for a year, then he went home again for a while, and persuaded his father to give him some dancing lessons. When he was thirteen he was sent to school at Florence.

All went smoothly for a little time, then there was an upheaval which put an end to school-days. A master whipped Enrico for something he had not done, and the lad, incensed beyond words at the injustice, picked up the nearest object to his hand and threw it. The "object" was an ink-pot, and it struck the master! The boy rushed from the school, tore home to his father, and told him everything.

Naturally there was no question of his returning. The puzzle was where he should be sent to next. All the time Cecchetti kept on saying: "Papa, I want to dance, I want to dance!" until the parental opposition was worn down, and he was at last sent to the Ecole de Danse, in Florence, where Giovanni Lepri, a pupil of the famous Blasis, was teacher.

After that there was no more trouble. Enrico worked hard and earnestly; he worked with determination, and he was aided by natural gifts for the art to which he was so passionately attached. In his mind he had his God of Dancing—it was Carlo Blasis, the famous teacher and dancer. Blasis was a pupil of Noverre, the celebrated ballet-master at the courts of France, Vienna, Stuttgart and Petrograd, the man who had revolutionized the out-worn conventions of dancing in his day, whom his friend and contemporary, Garrick, had called "the Shakespeare of the dance."

Elegant in appearance, cultured, a connoisseur, a collector, a littérateur and a dilettante, Carlo Blasis was said to have belonged to the Italian nobility. His friends were amongst the painters, the musicians and the writers of the day. All his life he was collecting pictures, china, gems and books. He had a library which was valued at a high price. During fourteen seasons Blasis was *premier danseur* at La Scala, in Milan, but he did not confine his art to his own country like many dancers of his day. He appeared in Paris

and London with immense success, yet his inclination had always been towards writing and producing ballets, rather than dancing. After extended tours in France and Italy, during which he appeared in many of his own ballets, Blasis injured one of his legs while dancing at the San Carlo, in his native town of Naples, and though the accident did not cripple him, it hampered him, and gave him the excuse to devote himself to writing articles and ballets, teaching, and compiling his "Code of Terpsichore;" the latter being a system of teaching founded on the greatest traditions of dancing, and in use to-day.

At seventy-three years of age, when Cecchetti first met him, he was still a beautiful figure of a man. Straight, courtly, with flowing cape and high stock, he attracted admiration everywhere. His art had been like a royal possession, and praise or blame affected him little. At the Scala he was treated with the utmost respect, and when he chose to come, was always welcomed at the rehearsals. Sometimes he spoke to the youthful and struggling dancers, and gave them advice. One day he singled out Cecchetti. "Who is that?"

"That's the son of Cesare Cecchetti, Enrico!"

"Ah, ask him to come here!"

Cecchetti came in wonder and delight at so great an honour.

"So you are the son of Cesare Cecchetti? How is he? I haven't seen him for a long time."

"Very well, thank you!"

"Remember me to him; don't forget. And you are a pupil of my pupil Lepri; good, good! Well, youngster, I've been watching you; you're getting on. I'm glad to see it, but let me tell you something. Don't listen to the fools outside"—he pointed to the auditorium—"Don't listen to their applause. Work!"

No advice could have been taken more fully to heart, for Cecchetti has always been a tremendous worker, and he has little faith in the slacker. Blasis himself is said to have worked fifteen hours a day; Cecchetti has worked with the fullest enthusiasm and at equal length. "I have but one passion, but one hobby; that is dancing," has been his motto from the day of his birth.

Giovanni Lepri, who was the head of the dancing school at which Cecchetti became a pupil, was a very different personality to his master, Carlo Blasis. He had none of the latter's suavity or charm, but he was, nevertheless, a wonderful teacher. Big and stout, his voice came from the depths like the growl of a bear. He consistently spoke as though there was some extraordinary mystery hidden behind his words.

"Yes, you danced well—but . . . good gracious! . . . *how* you will *have* to work before you can do anything! Oh, oh!" this as though there was something really tragic to tell: "Your *pliés* and *sur les pointes!* and your *battements!* Oh, oh! and your *portes-bras*, that in the *fourth* position! . . . and your *jeté*, oh! and your *body* . . . which was always bent over. . . . Oh! you *must*, you *obviously* must *work* . . . or . . . !"

Like most teachers, Lepri gave small ballets at his school at the end of each year, and he also obtained opportunities for his pupils to try their feet (literally) in ballets at the theatres. At the school finals Cecchetti danced many *pas de deux* with his sister Pia, and when he was sixteen he danced in his father's ballet "Nicolo di Lapi," in which his sister was *prima ballerina*. His fellow students were in the habit of laughing at his dancing; they used to chaff him, saying: "You will be a dancer when I am Pope!" Naturally, when he

got his opportunity at the Pagliamo Theatre in " Nicolo di Lapi," they came in full force. Curiously enough, Cecchetti surprised everybody, and those who had laughed at him told him he had danced beautifully.

" Yes, yes," said Cecchetti, " I am *premier danseur*, but you are not yet Pope ! "

His father's opinion of his dancing was not so flattering ; he simply said " Not bad," and then proceeded to tell him of endless faults.

A series of engagements at small towns, here and there, in company with his sister Pia, followed Cecchetti's appearance at the Pagliamo Theatre in Florence. He was then about sixteen, full of life and energy, anxious beyond everything to get experience. Unfortunately, at Terni, near Rome, his travels were stopped by a bad attack of malaria, and when he was again able to work he returned to the school at Florence for further study.

It was curious how the title of Maestro, even at such an early date in his career, began to be applied to him. At Lepri's school his fellow students alluded to him as Maestro because he was always ready to help and explain. When his father and mother were dancing at the theatre he used to go on the stage before the performance, and when the dancers went through their exercises they used to ask him to come and work with them. First one girl, and then another : " Maestro, come and be my partner ! " " Maestro, come and help me ! "

When he was nineteen Cecchetti got an excellent engagement to dance for a season with his father, his mother and his sister, and a year later he made his real début on the stage of La Scala, Milan.

Great beyond words was the reputation of La Scala then, and even to-day the names of La Scala, at Milan, and the San Carlo, at Naples, carry weight and import-

ance, though the hey-day of opera and ballet has passed.

The present building dates from 1778, and by a decree obtained from the Empress Marie Teresa of Austria, was built on the site of the old church, St. Maria della Scala. Piermarino, of Folignio, was the architect, and Levate and Reina painted the ceiling. The cost of the whole was forty thousand pounds, an enormous sum at that time, but it was expended on a theatre which was the biggest and the most artistically beautiful of its date. The stage even now is the largest in the world, measuring ninety-eight feet in width, and a hundred and forty-five feet in length. The interior was all white and gold, in horseshoe form, with five tiers of boxes rising one above the other. Nearly a thousand people, including the artists, are employed there, and in connection with the theatre there is the famous dancing school, from whence have issued the greatest Italian dancers. It gives free tuition to sixty pupils. There is also the Ecole de Chant. Since 1872 La Scala has become the property of Milan. The Municipality grants its lessee an annual sum of nearly a thousand pounds, and this, with the yearly rent of boxes, brings a monetary backing of well over two thousand pounds. A Commission elected by the Common Council of Milan, and also the owners of boxes, have control.

The ideals of art at La Scala were high, but art is mortal, after all, and jealousies and vexations were not lacking behind the scenes of the greatest theatre in Italy. Cecchetti, with his youth and ambition, came upon several obstacles which seem to thrive in the *coulisses* of most theatres in Italy and elsewhere. His troubles started with Signor Casati, who was *maître de L'Ecole de Danse*. He had a favourite nephew whom he wanted to dance instead of Cecchetti.

Beyond doubt the evening was worth a contest, as it was a gala performance for which Cecchetti had been engaged. All Italy was *en fête*, rejoicing over the decisive ending of the Franco-Prussian War; people were out for amusement, and there was no end to the light-hearted gaiety of the populace.

All the aristocracy and nobility of the town were to be present at La Scala on the special night, and it promised to be one of those occasions that would long be remembered.

Signor Casati tried his best to dissuade Cecchetti from dancing. He started by telling him that he was too young to play the leading rôle. He had better wait and dance in the second ballet of the season. "For the first night my nephew will dance."

Cecchetti shook his head. "No, I was engaged to play on the first night, and I will do so."

Casati shrugged his shoulders. "Well, if you will go to Paradise against the Saints, you must!"

Friends of Casati's came and attempted to persuade Cecchetti to defer his appearance. They suggested it would be a great ordeal; he was too young; it would not be to his benefit, etc., etc.

But though nervousness was almost choking Cecchetti, and as the hour approached he was veritably trembling with fright, he refused to give in. He had set his heart on a *tour de force*, which Casati had practically forbidden him to do. The night arrived; Cecchetti stood in the wings quivering and shaking, and buoying himself up with the thought that if he was not successful he would join the army the following day.

No artist, no matter how experienced, ever gets over the thrill of the curtain going up on a first night, and no artist ever forgets the night it went up to present a new aspirant for fame to the audience. When Cecchetti saw the brilliant house he became quite

dizzy. Royalty and great people were present. Prince Humberto and Princess Marguerite were in a box, and the house bristled with notabilities. The ballet of the evening was "La Dea del Walhalla," by Bori. In this Cecchetti took the part of a Fire Fiend, and his entrance was intended to be extremely diabolical.

His idea had been to make a striking entrance, leaping out of a cavern of fire and landing gracefully on the stage. To assist him in his high jump, Cecchetti had arranged for a couple of wires to draw him up and give him impetus.

But it is one thing to rehearse and another thing to perform when nervousness takes away one's control. Cecchetti, in his anxiety to do well, overcome by the sight of the huge auditorium packed with people, miscalculated the moment when he should have let go the wires, and landed ignominiously sprawling on the stage.

That was mishap number one!

Later in the act he had to run round the stage in pursuit of some poor fleeing creatures; how well it had gone at rehearsal! But alas! there were the prompter's candles to be reckoned with. They flickered in the draught and made a little skating rink of grease in their vicinity.

Cecchetti went too near the proscenium, put his foot on the wax, and again fell on the stage!

In the next scene he had to dance a *pas de deux*. The *ballerina* was a good dancer, but her face was not pretty—the public did not care for her. With something of the feeling of a sheep being taken to the slaughter, Cecchetti partnered the unpopular lady. In the midst of it there was a fearful thud behind the scenes. Oil began to trickle over the boards. Cecchetti's heart went down into his shoes as he thought

of his pirouettes. What would happen to him if he had to twirl over a slippery, oily surface ?

When the *pas de deux* was ended, and he stood in the wings trying to console the weeping *ballerina*, who had received no applause, he found out the origin of the noise which had disturbed them. A big lustre filled with oil, which was being drawn up at the back of the scene in preparation for Act II., had broken the cords and fallen to the ground with a crash !

Well, it was a woeful night, and how slowly it moved ! Like a tragedy going steadily towards . . . what ? Cecchetti wondered, and in his ears he could hear Signor Casati's voice : " For the first night my nephew will dance ! " Ugh ! That nephew was out there somewhere in the darkness gloating over his misfortunes. He began to wonder if he had been quite wise in his determination to execute a series of pirouettes such as no dancer had ever accomplished before him. Messrs. Gardel and Vestris were accredited with having invented the pirouette, and even Blasis spoke of a pirouette of three or four turns in the second position as uncommonly difficult. Nothing in dancing was more exacting, nothing gave greater proof of a dancer's uprightness ! Such was the opinion of the most famous masters of the day. And Cecchetti was going to execute thirty-two in number, right along the proscenium, starting slowly and gaining impetus as he went. He held his breath as the moment approached. He kept on repeating to himself : " If you fail in this you become a soldier to-morrow ! " and then he rushed on, his nerves suddenly steady, his head cool, and the pirouettes on which he counted so much for his success went off to perfection. The audience shouted and clapped with delight. It was the *tour de force* of the evening, and crowned him with unqualified success.

Round to the back of the stage came the Director, the notable people, the chattering dilettantes of the theatre.

" Cecchetti, you were like a locomotive ! "

" Cecchetti, I congratulate you."

People came and shook his hand, and told him of his success, and all he could say was : " If I had not done it well, I should have given up dancing and become a soldier ! "

Of course after that Signor Casati and his nephew had to retire gracefully and leave Cecchetti to gather in further honours, in fact to become the petted hero of the hour. People fussed over him, the Press spoke of him as " *Danseur à la mode,*" and " the spoilt child of the public." Everyone looked forward to the second ballet of the season for another " sensation." It came, but in a different manner to that expected.

The ballet was " L'Asvero," by Pallerini. It was one of those ridiculously false concoctions of the day, which even prohibitionists would not put up with at this date. Even in 1870 its quaint anachronisms were commented on by the Press in humorous fashion.

One scene was in a desert, where a caravan had halted. Of course the *maître de ballet*, oblivious of everything except the necessity of putting on a *pas de deux* in the approved place of honour, selected the desert. After all, why not ? The priestesses of the *corps de ballet* in " Aïda " dance on the tomb of the ill-fated couple, who are occupying their last moments in vocal gymnastics ! There was more probability about a *pas de deux* in the desert ! Quite innocently the *maître de ballet* chose the venue, and quite guilelessly Cecchetti added to the foolish idea by dancing with a camellia in his hand. Of course it was very pretty and graceful, but in the desert !

The next day the papers printed satirical criticisms

about the ballet and facetiously alluded to the unfortunate camellia.

"How *spirituelle* of Signor Cecchetti to suggest the inhabitants of the desert? The *maître de ballet* had forgotten the camels, but Signor Cecchetti delicately suggested them by carrying a camellia in his hand."

In Italian the play on the words was *Camelli* (camels) and *Camelie* (camellia). The following night Cecchetti discarded the impossible desert flower.

Sometimes the most conspicious lines and effective bits of business in a play are "gags," invented on the spur of the moment. Sometimes they spring up at rehearsal and are retained, sometimes they come in the course of a run.

In a ballet there is not much room for "gags," though a dancer is not the marionette that audiences imagine. Cecchetti has often been asked if he did not find it tedious counting his steps—"Was it not a great effort of memory?"—and his answer had been: "No, so long as the general plan is not changed it does not matter if I take sixteen steps instead of eight, or if I raise my arms instead of crossing them. One feels different at different times."

These variations in ballet dancing are akin to the dramatic "gag." One night when Cecchetti was dancing at the Theatre Communal at Bologna, he and the *prima ballerina* quite by accident perpetrated a dancing "gag." It was in a ballet by Cecchetti's father, called "The Inn Keeper." Just before the final curtain an attractive pose had been arranged with Cecchetti holding the *prima ballerina* reposing on one arm. The first night she fell a little too soon, and Cecchetti caught her so near the ground that he had to go on one knee to support her as she lay on the stage. The audience seemed to think it was a novelty, and applauded it with

so much appreciation that the "gag" became permanent.

Social life in Italy was strongly defined in those days, and artists were not only badly paid, in comparison to the present rate of salaries (forty pounds for a season of five weeks was the average for a *premier danseur*), but they had duties to perform which would scandalize the *premier danseur* of modern times. At most of the theatres it was customary for the principal dancer to sprinkle the stage before the performance. One night, at Lugo, Cecchetti was going round with a watering-can, damping the boards. An elderly and aristocratic member of the Directorate was talking to one of the artists, and unfortunately Cecchetti not only sprinkled the stage, but also the gentleman's immaculate trousers. With undue ferocity the victim of the water-can turned upon Cecchetti, and calling him a "dirty hound!" raised his fist to strike him. A friend of Cecchetti's, who was standing by, sprang forward and administered a smart blow to the Director. In a moment there was a hurly-burly of words and pushes and vehement argument.

This all happened close to the lowered curtain, and the public, hearing the noise, imagined there was a fire and began to stampede out of the house. Cecchetti, thinking that something should be done to pacify the audience, and at the same time feeling heartily indignant and just a little reckless, went before the curtain and begged everyone to be calm.

"There is no fire, there is no danger, the trouble is, one of the Directors has insulted me."

As soon as everyone understood the house resounded with chatter and cries of "Down with the Director!"

In spite of the little revolutionary unrehearsed prelude, the curtain went up at the appointed time, the ballet was given, and then the controversy was resumed

in earnest. A couple of policemen came to Cecchetti's dressing-room, and telling him that he had "no right to address the audience," arrested him on the spot. The news flew round the theatre, from end to end, and artists and audience gathered outside to see the hero of the evening marched off. They cheered him as he passed with as much zest as they would have bestowed on Garibaldi himself, and Cecchetti, entering into the spirit of the demonstration gallantly, addressed the crowd, saying: "I am not going to prison, I am only going to have my supper."

At the police station the Inspector sent Cecchetti to the best room available, and there, during the night, he sat and wrote an article for the leading newspaper which stated the pros and cons of the case. It was published the following day, and was quite a "scoop" for the journal, at the same time it roused much discussion and, going from point to point, finally enlarged on the grievances of artists in general. The case was taken to court, and the question of trousers versus watering-can became a *cause célèbre*. Had Cecchetti sprinkled the unfortunate gentleman's wearing apparel on purpose, or was it an accident? Had the Director any right to call an artist a "dirty dog?" Was it seemly, in any case, for a *premier danseur* to be made to perform such a menial office?

Sides were taken, letters and articles appeared on the subject in the Press. Finally the Director offered to pay Cecchetti a sum of money. The reply to the offer was a refusal. Well, what did he want? A letter of apology from the gentleman who had been the cause of all the trouble! Impossible! Never! Unheard of!

In the meantime the Director was becoming distinctly unpopular. Many things had been elucidated which were not at all to his credit, and at last he had to

give in and write an apology, which was published in several papers in Italy.

That ended the case, but it did not end the feud. The management would not re-engage Cecchetti, the public refused to support the theatre if he was absent, with the result that the theatre was closed the whole of the following season.

Not in every town in Italy were audiences as friendly as that which supported Cecchetti's cause at Lugo. They varied in type, but in Naples, more than elsewhere, they held firmly to their reputation for scepticism, and even brutality. Singers and dancers dreaded the criticism of the public which came to the San Carlo, not only because it was difficult to please, but because of the manner in which disapproval was shown. Hooting, whistling, shouting, hissing, constant interruptions and cries of "Go off!" greeted the artist who was unfortunate enough to be disliked. On the other hand, great generosity was shown when the reverse was the case.

When Madame Patti came to Naples for the first time, the public was determined to form its own opinion of her. If it did not like her, it had no intention of sparing her. Stories went round of her wonderful singing, of her gifts as an actress. How she was paid ten thousand francs a night, and would not sing until the full sum was handed to her in gold. The Neapolitans nodded their heads; well, they would see!

The opera was "Traviata," wherein Patti was at her best. When she came on the stage there was a certain section of the audience which started to applaud her, but a larger number hushed down the attempt. Patti sang the first act as, it has been said, nobody but she could sing it. The house remained silent! Not a hand-clap, not a murmur! The second act was greeted in the same way. Not until the final curtain was reached

did the audience express any feeling of any kind, then came a thunderous outburst; excitement, admiration, shouting applause! Patti came out over and over again. The evening ended with a crowd awaiting her exit at the stage door, taking the horses out of her carriage, and dragging it to her hotel.

There was no mistaking the pleasure of a Neapolitan audience when it *was* pleased.

The critical decisions of the Neapolitan audiences were always considered to be just—on the first night. After that there was no reliance to be placed upon the mood, which might be hilarious, or cynical, or pitiless. No matter how much commendation may have been bestowed upon the first night, the subsequent performances were always in jeopardy.

As a young man, Cecchetti was a great favourite at the San Carlo, but even he did not escape a demonstration of animosity. During the run of a ballet, which had been performed for fifteen times, there came a night which might have broken the nerve of the best established artist. Among the *abonnés* of the front row there were a number of heedless, turgid critics who were always ready for a "rag." On the evening in question they kept the house in a state of commotion to signify that they wanted a new ballet. The story had to do with a young man who was in love with a millionaire's daughter. Of course the rich papa opposed the idea, and the lover had recourse to a series of disguises in which he met his sweeetheart. One of his assumed characters was an old dancing master, and with his fiddle under his arm he came to the house of his lady love. Naturally he came face to face with the father, and there was a baffling scene between them, which started with the dancing master taking his hat off and saying: "How do you do?"

The art of bowing has many inflections, especially

Photo by] *Stoll.*

LYDIA LOPOKOVA

[*To face p.* 32.

to the Neapolitan mind, and Cecchetti's bow was considered offensive because, owing to the father keeping too much to the right of the stage, it appeared to be directed at the audience. Shrieks, whistles, hoots! The ballet proceeded. Howls, yells of "Go off?" "It's an insult!" "Boo . . . ooo . . . ooo!" etc. The whole company continued to dance amidst the uproar. Cecchetti as *premier danseur* performed a *pas seul*, and a *pas de deux* with his sister; everything and everyone on the stage proceeded as usual until the final curtain. Then the noise was fearful. The Director of the theatre came on the stage in a great state of excitement. He poured out his wrath on Cecchetti.

"How dare you behave like that? You have deliberately insulted the public!"

"Indeed, no," Cecchetti remonstrated, while the yells of the audience resounded in his ears from the other side of the curtain. "My bow was meant for Signor ——, and is part of the ballet. Unfortunately he did not come to the right position, and it seemed as though I saluted the audience ironically!"

"I tell you, you have insulted the public; you must go and ask their pardon."

It is a very big thing to demand an apology from a hot-blooded young man who feels he is not in fault, and it was only after a struggle with himself that Cecchetti consented to address the audience. The curtain went up, and very slowly he entered from the back, and walked down the long stretch of boards to the footlights. He might have been a French aristocrat going to the guillotine from the noise and hostility he roused. In his hand he carried a small cane, and when he arrived at the proscenium he held it up for silence. In a deep baritone voice, which he assumed for the occasion, he said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I

am obliged by the Director to come and make my apologies to "—he paused and pointed out the little band of mischief-makers in the front row of the stalls —" the gentlemen who think themselves insulted. I am a sincere artist, and I deny that I have offended anybody ! "

The humour of the whole house changed at once. Instead of derogatory yells and boos, cries of " Bravo, Cecchetti ! " " Viva, Cecchetti," resounded through the house, and, to make his victory complete, the men who had been at the root of all the trouble were called upon to " Get out," which they did, ignominiously.

The Press on the day following gleefully commented on the *scandale,* and sided with Cecchetti, saying : " We always knew Enrico Cecchetti was a great dancer, but we did not know he was an orator as well."

CHAPTER III

LOOKING back over the years, some of Enrico Cecchetti's most lively memories belong to seasons at the Tordinona Theatre, in Rome, where he was born. His native town was intensely interesting, then as now, and it represented life and politics at their fullest. The amiable yet impulsive personality of Pope Pius IX. was both felt and seen. He drove, he rode, he walked. In his white robe he was often met in the Pincio, blessing those who bent the knee, talking to a friend, or laying his hand caressingly on the head of a child. The great coaches of the crimson cardinals, with their handsome black horses and gorgeous footmen, rolled by, and the uniforms of French officers and Papal Zouaves added further colour to the crowd.

Princes, nobles, cardinals and eminent strangers kept the social life stirring, while artists and enthusiastic sightseers frequented the cafés, and met and talked and lounged. Liszt, the inexhaustible producer of rhapsodies, symphonies and variations, was coming and going, wandering from monastery to monastery, contemplating taking holy orders and visiting the eccentric Princess Wittgenstein, whose love for him never diminished. For twenty-seven years she lived in a house which was always kept dark, and passed most of her time in a room with only one candle standing on her flower-laden table, where she read, wrote and ate her meals.

During the day business and pleasure went their

course, at night there were places of amusement to visit. There was the Teatro Valle, which had no subscribers, but the French Ambassador and the members of the Embassy went to perfect themselves in Italian, for the Valle was the home of tragedy, and was visited by such artists as Salvini, Ristori and Belotti. The box on the left of the stage was always occupied by the police, and in the third tier the prelates from the Vatican were present to superintend the decorum of the performance. The theatre was lighted with oil lamps, the scenery wretched, the seats uncomfortable, but when Ristori acted the people crowded in for the love of her art; to weep and be moved. Ristori's fame was local just then; her world-wide reputation was yet to come. The Metastasio Vitale Theatre was set aside for those dialect plays, in which all the actors and actresses wore masks. Each town in Italy had its company of masked performers, who were known by a special pseudonym. One of the most notable was the Pulicinella in Naples, headed by the inimitable Antonio Petito. He often brought his company to Rome, to the Metastasio Vitale, and in 1863 he introduced a number of satirical allusions to Italian affairs to please the Neapolitans and royalist emigrants of the Two Sicilies, who were then in Rome. When the company returned to Naples, the public resented Petito's method of pandering to the taste of the refugees in Rome, and greeted their reappearance with hootings and cat-calls, and even missiles, so that Petito had to come out on the stage and implore mercy.

Petito was a great friend of Cecchetti's, and when he went to his theatre, Petito, who made many humorous gags, loved to single him out for special allusion. One night he saw Cecchetti in a box, and the spirit of impromptu seized him. He turned to his fellow actor.

"I am going to be married," he informed him.

"Indeed, I am surprised! Who are you marrying?"

"A charming lady."

"But you have no money."

"Oh, haven't I? You wait, I am going to be rich. I have been engaged at the San Carlo. Cecchetti has engaged me!"

"Indeed. What for?"

"To sprinkle the stage!"

Off the stage Petito was a sad personality. All his life he was in love with a lady whose social position was so far above him that there was not the remotest chance of marriage. He lived to be an old man, but he never left off work, and he died in harness. One night, when his cue came to go on the stage, he was found sitting bolt upright in his chair in the wings—dead. The era of the masked player and dialect plays passed away with him, and the vogue is but a memory of a long-forgotten type of amusement.

Besides the theatres already mentioned, there was the Argentina, which put on plays and small ballets to please its patrons. Each and all were closed in the summer, during which period performances were given by excellent artists in the open air at the Corea, built into the magnificent mausoleum of Augustus. It often happened that while the plays were in progress at the Corea, the bells of San Rocco would ring, and all action on the stage had to be suspended till they ceased.

Of all the theatres in Rome, the Tordinona was the most important.

Originally the Tordinona had been a prison, where Beatrice Cenci was immured. Later, when it was turned into a theatre, it owed its success to the astoundingly clever management of Vincenzo Jacovacci.

It was not by any means the largest theatre in Rome,

but it was the most recherché; frequented by the aristocracy, encouraged and assisted by Pius IX., its standards of art compared more than favourably with the finest in Europe. The season was always in the winter, for no important people stayed in Rome during the heat of the summer, and the opening performance was always a social event. Roman society came *en grande tenue;* jewels sparkled on the ladies, the French Governor and his party occupied the centre box, not only the first night, but at every performance. Gendarmes and firemen in full-dress uniform looked after the house and smart attendants showed people to their seats and served refreshments to the second and third tiers of boxes between the first and second acts. Jacovacci saw that the social distinctions were strictly observed, each part of the house having its special clientèle. The proscenium boxes were occupied entirely by the beaux of the day, the second tier was kept for the aristocracy, the third for the rich citizens, the fourth for the office employés of the Ministries. Priests were not officially allowed to go to the theatre, but they went all the same, dressed as laymen, and mingled with the ministerial clerks on the top range.

Vincenzo Jacovacci, to whom the Tordinona owed its success, was a recognized figure in Roman life. He was a little man, short, stout, with black hair and black moustache. His hands behind his back, dangling a small cane, and taking short, quick steps, he was always moving, always devising, always watching. Excessively short-sighted, he had recourse to several pairs of spectacles, which he put on one in front of the other for different ranges of vision. Early in his career he had been arrested for selling more seats for the first performance of Donizetti's "Adelaide" than the theatre would hold. The surplus takings were made forfeit to the Government, and after spending a night

at the police station, and paying a fine as well, he returned to management. In spite of his unfortunate experience he stood well with Pio Nono, for he was a good Papal subject, a Catholic, and he found the Papal gendarmes most useful in controlling the excitable singers and *corps de ballet* behind the scenes.

Jacovacci had original methods of management, and though he was excessively ignorant in art, he had an unfailing knack of judging the public taste, and finding the artists that would attract. He was something of a humorist and a satirist too. His faithful henchman was a certain Andrea, whom Cecchetti describes as a "small, young man of forty-five." Whenever there was a crisis of any kind Jacovacci's squeaky voice could be heard calling him. Once or twice it happened that some singer was not successful. In the morning there were cries of "Andrea, Andrea!" from Jacovacci's office. "Andrea, come here." Then would follow the rubric which Jacovacci had decided upon where failure was concerned.

"Andrea, you must take Signor —— out this morning to see Rome. Go and get a carriage and drive him round."

Andrea went for the carriage. Then Signor —— was called to the office. Jacovacci, with excessive politeness, bade him "Good-morning!"

"Good-morning," Signor —— responded, very pleased to be treated with so much consideration.

"Have you ever seen the sights of Rome, Signor ——?"

"No, Signor Jacovacci, I have not!"

"You have not! Why, how is that?"

"I have been so busy rehearsing, there has been no time."

"Oh, that must be rectified. My secretary will drive you round this morning."

Signor —— protested, feeling all the while most delighted. "Really, you . . . you are most kind. . . . I . . .!"

"Not at all," Jacovacci interposed briskly. "I am sending you now, because, as far as I am concerned, it is the last time you will ever see Rome or this theatre either. Good morning!"

Whenever Jacovacci was in trouble about his theatre he would waylay the Pope, who was not shut up in the Vatican as he is now, but delighted in long walks and rides. Prostrating himself before Pio Nono, Jacovacci soon got a smiling recognition.

"Ah! Jacovacci, what is the matter with you?"

"I am not well, your Holiness; great worries are upon me, business is not good; I don't know how I shall keep the theatre open."

Pio Nono would smile and pass on. The following day a messenger from the Vatican brought money and good wishes from the Pope to the manager of the Tordinona.

Monsignor Randi kept a vigilant and kindly eye on the Tordinona, and straightened out many of the difficulties and fracas which were always occurring. One night Cecchetti was sitting at the back of the stage, suffering terribly from toothache. One of the Papal guards who—be it said in a whisper—was not quite sober, took objection to the suffering Cecchetti, who was swaying backwards and forwards in agony. He came up to him and said familiarly: "Well, little dandy, and what is the matter with you? What are you making such a fuss about? Go along, and get off the stage!"

"Leave me alone," said Cecchetti, "it's no business of yours. I am not in anybody's way!"

"What do you mean? Don't dare to speak to me like that. I am a Papal guard; I won't have it!"

"Why don't you leave me alone," Cecchetti groaned.

"I am not interfering with you. To the Devil with you and the Pope too!"

Of course there was at once a hubbub. The guard wanted to arrest Cecchetti on the spot; Jacovacci could be heard calling "Andrea!"; everybody was horrified that such desecration should be uttered about the Pope. In the midst of it, Cecchetti, clasping his aching face, worried and distressed, raced off to Monsignor Randi, who was in the theatre.

"Monsignor, I am suffering terribly with tooth-ache, and one of the Papal guards came and spoke to me, and . . . and . . . I was in such pain I told him that I wished both he and the Pope would go to the Devil."

"Ch . . . ch . . . ch!" said Monsignor Randi, trying to stop him from saying any more. "Ch . . . ch! go back to the stage and don't say another word about it."

Cecchetti went back and danced unmolested. Later in the evening it was known that the Papal guard had been sent to another post, never to return to the Tordinona again.

Although Jacovacci from time to time engaged some of the finest artists in Europe to sing at the Tordinona, he had no knowledge of music, and there was an anecdote of his ignorance in this respect which went the round of Rome, and made even Liszt, whose address was then "L'Abbé Liszt, au Vatican," laugh immoderately.

One evening it suddenly entered the managerial mind of Jacovacci that it would be profitable to put on "Aïda" for the following night. He went to Terzani, the able conductor, and told him of his decision.

"It is impossible," said Terzani.

"Impossible! How, why?"

"To-morrow there is a function at the Sistine

Chapel. Most of the orchestra will have to go there, so we cannot have a rehearsal."

"I don't care anything about that. They *must* come if I want them!"

"Very well," Terzani replied, "I promise you that I personally will be here, but if, when I arrive, I find one single musician missing, I will throw up my post, and you must find a new conductor."

"Don't be frightened, they will all come. Andrea! Andrea!"

Andrea arrived promptly.

"Andrea, put up a notice on the board that every member of the orchestra must be here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning for rehearsal. If they do not come I shall discharge them."

The next morning all the orchestra turned up. Terzani sat at the conductor's desk, baton in hand. Jacovacci hopped up and down the stage, hands behind back, cane dangling, counting the men as they came in.

Terzani leant over to the clarinet and said in a loud voice: "A sharp is missing," indicating a misprint in the music.

Jacovacci was immediately in a fever of excitemen.

"Who did you say is missing? What? Mr. A. Sharp! Andrea, Andrea! go and get Mr. Sharp at once; take a carriage, and if he refuses to come have him arrested."

One of the fine tenors who came under Jacovacci's management was Enrico Barbacini, who was singing in opera when Cecchetti was *premier danseur* at the Tordinona. The *prima donna* of the date was La Bianca, with whom Barbacini fell in love. La Bianca returned his affection, and quite an idyllic affair was proceeding when Barbacini's wife arrived. Seated in the theatre she watched her husband from afar, and

La Bianca, catching sight of her, promptly fainted on the stage in a state of rage, jealousy and despair. The curtain had to come down, and Jacovacci's high squeak was heard calling for " Andrea ! "

Andrea, ready for orders, arrived.

" Andrea, you must put on the ballet at once. We cannot go on with the opera."

Away went Andrea to seek the members of the *corps de ballet*, only to find that half of them had not arrived. Back he went to Jacovacci.

" Impossible ; the ballet is not here yet ! "

" What, not here ! Well, then, go before the curtain and tell the audience that La Bianca is too indisposed to complete the performance to-night, and that, much to our regret, we must close the doors for the evening. Those who would like to have their seats transferred to another evening can do so, and those who would like to have their money back will receive it at the box office."

The crowd dispersed quietly, and matters were amicably arranged at the box office. Behind the scenes Jacovacci sat and thought over his loss. Was there no way by which he could save something out of the waste ? Somehow or other the expenses for the evening should be kept down ! Ah ! He thought of the candles which were supplied to all the artists in their dressing-rooms. The stars were allowed eight, the lesser artists six, four, and so on in a downward grade. It was an accepted custom to take the unused candles home, and every artist had a number of candles from the theatre with which to light his house. Jacovacci's frugal mind fixed on the only means by which a few pennies could be saved.

" Andrea, Andrea ! Go into all the dressing-rooms and gather up all the candles you can find ! "

Cecchetti's stories of Jacovacci were an endless

source of amusement to himself and his friends, and indeed to everyone in Rome, and there is no personality in the theatre life of Italy that stands out so clearly. Never was there a man more ready to make use of an opportunity and turn it to good purpose than he. When the Tiber used to overflow its banks and make the way to the Tordinona impracticable, Jacovacci immediately had a temporary bridge erected, and he used to stand and delightedly watch his patrons, who occasionally included Princess Wittgenstein, enter his theatre in this novel way. When, in 1871, Victor Emmanuel entered Rome at the head of the Italian troops, and Rome became the capital of Italy, Jacovacci acted promptly.

"Andrea, Andrea! go and look in the store cupboard under the stage, and you will find a number of Italian flags there. Bring them out and hang them up at once." The flags had been there since 1849, when Italy had been beaten by Austria. Jacovacci's unfailing memory went back in a flash over twenty-two years and made use of an opportunity for a show of loyalty. After the long Austrian and French rule, there were few, if any, who had any Italian flags, and thus it happened that the Teatro Tordinona was the first building to display the flag of United Italy.

During the Papal rule in Rome censorship was carried to ridiculous lengths. The theatres being the chief centres of patriotic demonstrations, the blue pencil was freely used. When Cecchetti was a child, in 1859, Jacovacci was associated with one of the most memorable events of Italian theatrical life. This was the first performance of Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera." The opera had been intended for production at the Naples opera house under the title of "Gustavus III." It was submitted to the censor, but he altered it so completely that Verdi refused to allow it to be per-

formed. Jacovacci immediately saw his opportunity. He went to Verdi, proposed putting on the opera in Rome, promised to get permission in eight days, returned with the manuscript, and promptly engaged Fraschini, the tenor, whom Verdi wanted for the leading part.

The Pontifical censor kept the opera for two months, instead of eight days, but gave permission for its production on condition that certain alterations should be observed. The scene of the opera was to be changed from Sweden to America, and the masked ball should be given by the Count Renato for the purpose of assassinating the Earl of Warwick, Governor of Boston, instead of by Johan Ankarstroeme, for the purpose of murdering Gustavus III. of Sweden, as in the original. The reason for this change was due to the fear of displeasing Napoleon III., whose life had recently been attempted by Orsini. Verdi agreed to accept the alterations, and the opera was received with enthusiasm by a crowded house, which arrived over one of Jacovacci's temporary bridges because the Tiber chose to overflow on that important evening.

During the time that Italy was going through her long struggles for independence, Cencetti, the poet, acted as censor of operas and ballets, and he exercised as much ingenuity as possible to preserve the art of the stage, and at the same time keep out anything that might have a political bearing. For instance, "Rigoletto," which suggested a king and his court, was in the Papal days called "Viscadello." The aria for baritone in "Lucrezia Borgia," which opened with the lines: "Not always will the fatal lagoon be closed to the public," which might have been construed to mean Venice, then belonging to Austria, was altered to "Not always will the moon be hidden by the clouds!" Even Shakespeare was altered for fear that some innuendo

against Austria, or France, or the Pope, or Victor Emmanuel, or one of the heroes of the day, should be picked out and made a reason for a demonstration. At the Tordinona, audiences were occasionally dispersed at a critical moment by revolutionary scatterings of pepper.

However, Jacovacci lived through it all, and for half a century reigned king in his theatre. After his death, at an advanced age, the building, which had been the centre of fashion and had housed all that was best in opera and ballet, was demolished.

When Cecchetti was dancing at the Spezzia Theatre at Pisa in 1866, with his sister Pia, he had an opportunity of rousing popular feeling to fever heat. It was the year of the war between Prussia and Austria, when Italy was allied with Prussia, and Venice was added to Italy. Garibaldi was enrolling troops, and there was a fear in high circles lest he should proclaim a Republic. The greater number of the public were for the bandit hero and free Italy, and Cecchetti felt that if he could get permission to dance a *pas seul* to the tune of Garibaldi's hymn he would make a tremendous *coup*. As a matter of fact, the tune was not permitted to be sung anywhere, and Cecchetti's demand was rigorously turned down by the police and the authorities. With much reserve Cecchetti communicated to some of his friends that he thought a *pas seul* to Garibaldi's hymn would be popular. They said nothing, but that night Cecchetti put on a red shirt and Garibaldi " shorts " under his ordinary dancing clothes. He performed the dances which had been set down for him, and then at the end the house began to resound with cries of " Cecchetti, Cecchetti, the hymn of Garibaldi ; dance the hymn of Garibaldi."

The whole house was roused to a pitch of excitement not easy to stop. " The Garibaldi hymn, the Garibaldi

hymn." There was no chance of going on with the performance. Cecchetti stood in the wings, listening.

"Can . . . can you dance the Garibaldi hymn?" the Director asked.

"Can I?" Cecchetti laughed. He threw off his outer clothes and stood before the Director in true Garibaldian kit.

"They are asking for it!" said the Director. "Go!" and he pushed Cecchetti on to the stage before a delighted audience, which did not abate its enthusiasm until Cecchetti had danced his *pas seul* over five times.

"This," says Cecchetti, "was the only time and the only way I ever mixed myself up in politics," in which he takes little interest. "I find sufficient politics in the art of dancing to fill all my time."

The element of commercialism, which is never entirely absent in the theatre, was active in Italy, then as now, in the personality of the agent, who scoured the country for talent and hired it out to the impresario. There were many men of extraordinary talent in Cecchetti's youth, who made a great deal of money at the business. At Bologna there was Magotti, a short, stout, excessively tranquil little man. He mostly reclined in a comfortable arm-chair, his hands folded over his tummy; always placid, and after dinner always sleepy. He did an immense amount of business, and discovered numberless young people, who owed their success to him. His son, who assisted him, belonged to the coming generation, and was inclined to rush and scurry. He would tear into his father's office with a telegram from some impresario who was at his wits' end to find an artist.

"Papa, here is a telegram from ——, he wants a tenor, at once——!"

Magotti, half asleep, replied: "Very well, leave it on my table; I will attend to it to-morrow!"

Another agent, who was even more famous than Magotti, was Ercole Tinti, a little, nervous man. Poor Tinti only had one eye, a misfortune which was due to a terrible encounter he had with brigands. He was riding in the *diligence* from Bologna to Rome—before the railway had been established—and in the night the heavy vehicle was attacked. Pistols were held at the driver's head, passengers were told to descend and give up their valuables; the coach was rifled of the gold which it carried. Tinti, being a timid man, called for help! "Save me, save me!"—quite an unpardonable appeal in the eyes of the brigands, so they beat him with the butt ends of their rifles, until Tinti fell helpless and bruised to the ground, and was rolled into a ditch.

Presently the brigands rode away, the passengers went back to their places, the coach again started for Rome. After having gone a short distance Tinti's absence was discovered, so the *diligence* returned to the unfortunate spot where the attack had taken place. From the side of the road a weak voice was groaning and moaning, and Tinti, with one eye knocked out, and terribly bruised, was found and rescued. He was taken to the Hotel Minerva, and that evening Cecchetti's father, who was in Rome at the time, received a note from Tinti. "Come and see me, I am at the Hotel Minerva." Cesare Cecchetti went, and what a shock it was to find Tinti, bruised and wounded, and scarcely able to speak.

For the rest of his life Tinti was dreadfully near-sighted. If he wrote a letter his long nose almost touched the paper, and everything he wrote he seemed to scratch out immediately. Whenever a new artist came to him about an engagement he always said: "Umph! You are a fool! What an idiot!" Nevertheless, he had a heart of gold. If a poor singer or a

dancer were down on his luck, Tinti always helped him.

" I have not yet heard from ——. I'll write again—don't worry—here, take this money, it will keep you going ! "

One of Tinti's discoveries was a magnificent tenor from that city of tenors—Florence. Like the other tenors who came from there, Bitielli was employed at a tannery, and, in common with his fellow workers, he was an excessively tall, broad young man. He had a voice of matchless beauty, yet he was totally lacking in ambition, and he would have sold the nails off his fingers—if that had been possible—for a glass of brandy. This lazy, feckless young man, finding that Tinti saw the possibility of making money out of him, was for ever at Tinti's door asking for money. At last Tinti got him an engagement.

" Listen, you silly young man, I have arranged for you to sing at Pisa. Now don't do anything foolish and miss your opportunity."

" But I have no money to pay my fare ! "

" Well, here is the money for your ticket, and something to go on with when you arrive ! "

Bitielli went away, and Tinti, highly delighted, sent a telegram to the Opera House at Pisa telling the impresario that he had found him " the God of tenors," who would pack his house for weeks to come. Then, in a smooth, happy state of mind, he went to his favourite café to get his *apéritif* before his dinner. He chose his little table, found a comfortable chair, and spoke to his favourite waiter. Then, to his horror, he recognized the man sitting opposite to him. It was Bitielli !

" Good heavens, what are you doing here ? "

" I . . . I was not feeling very well ; I came here . . . and . . ."

"But you ought to be on your way to Pisa by now. Come with me to the station at once!"

Tinti dragged off the tiresome young man to the terminus, bought him his ticket, gave him some more money, saw him into a first-class compartment, and then went to his dinner, feeling that at last Bitielli was really launched. He lingered over his meal, then strolled down to another restaurant for his coffee. The first person he saw was Bitielli, drinking cognac, quite oblivious to the cares of life. The moment Tinti had turned his back on him at the railway station, he had made his exit by the opposite door, and gone straight to the café where he could procure the one pleasure which made existence endurable.

Cecchetti was once engaged at the same theatre as Bitielli, who was singing in Rossini's opera "Moïse." When the moment came for him to sing his aria, Bitielli was incapable of standing on his feet. Luigi Casati, the conductor of the orchestra, knew nothing of this. He raised his baton for Bitielli's entrance, but no Bitielli appeared. Casati didn't make any pause. He calmly sang the aria himself from the conductor's chair, and, having a fine voice, made quite a sensation.

Beaucarde was another celebrated Florentine tenor, also from the tannery. He had a brilliant career, which he would not allow to come to an end. When his voice was quite gone he announced his intention of coming out as a baritone. His friends tried to dissuade him, they threatened to go in a body and hiss him, but he only replied: "If I can't sing as a tenor, then I am determined to sing as a baritone!"

"But it is impossible; no one will engage you!"

"What! no one engage Beaucarde, who has sung from one end of Italy to the other? Don't talk such nonsense!"

Beaucarde obtained an offer to sing the baritone part in "Ernani," which he promptly accepted.

His rough friends came round him, calling him every name under the sun. In their estimation he was nothing less than a ——, a ——, a ——, etc., to pretend he was even a baritone. Why, his voice was gone!

"When you open your mouth no sound will come out!"

"We shall see your teeth and hear nothing!"

"It will be like the braying of an ass!"

Still Beaucarde persisted, and so did his friends. On the night selected for his appearance they crammed the gallery. They jostled one another, they talked out loud, they hissed Beaucarde the moment he put his foot on the stage. He continued singing without showing any sign of noticing their demonstrations of disapproval, but in the last act at the lines: "I pardon everybody," he jumped up, and shaking his fist at the gallery, shouted: "All except those dogs up there!"

Tinti's attempts at management were not successful. Once, when he had been running a season of opera at Fermo, business had been poor. So Tinti made up his mind to save what he could from the wreckage. He sent someone down to the theatre to collect all the money from the box office. Then, spreading the news that he was dead, he left the town.

The brothers Marze were a couple of impresarios who had as big a name in Italy as Jacovacci himself. One was a large, fat man, the other tall and thin. When business was bad they also found refuge in flight. The stout one thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked the room.

"Umph, things are not going well. I don't fancy we are going to pick up either."

"No, we are losing money, and we shall lose more, there is no doubt about that! Lucien, you had better

take the first train to ——, and when the artists ask for their salaries to-morrow morning I will tell them you have gone to get it at —— ! ”

“ Yes,” Lucien would nod his head, “ it is best for me to go to —— ! ”

After he had gone, his brother kept the artists quiet with the fallacy of money coming from another town, and then he would begin to sing a few lines from a comic opera as he walked about.

“ E l’ amico se la squaglia ” (“ And the friend is going ”),
“ E l’ amico si squaglio ” (“ And the friend he is off ”).

This afterwards became known as his farewell, for he always vanished within a few hours.

The flying impresario was a customary figure when Cecchetti was a young man, so was the artist pleading for his salary. Except on rare occasions there were no recriminations, as the system of payment was based on a small salary and a percentage of the box office receipts. It was quite easy for the impresario to manipulate figures to his advantage, and to take what money there was when business was bad, travel to another town and start another enterprise there. Most of the theatres were dowered by the Government, so that the lessee had a subsidy.

As a rule, the first three leads of a company had the primary consideration when pay day came round. The chorus and *coryphées* came last. Naturally, the artists hung together and kept an eye on the business, while the impresarios backed one another up in their methods of management. Cecchetti, Sylvestre, a singer, and Drigo, who afterwards became conductor of the orchestra at the Imperial Theatre, Petrograd, were frequently engaged together in the early days of his career. One night, when “ L’Africaine ” was being given, Sylvestre scented the speedy departure of the impresario. Desiring to spread the news, he gave it

in the course of an aria. Instead of singing, "Be careful, sailors; the weather will soon be bad," he said, "Take care, artists; the business is bad, we shall get no wages!"

The whole company was on the *qui vive* at once. Immediately after the performance Cecchetti, Drigo and Sylvestre cornered the impresario. They pleaded they were very hard up, that their wages were overdue, etc., and made out such a case for themselves that they were paid. The next morning the impresario could not be found. The permanent management of the theatre were consequently approached by the unfortunate company, and, being an honest firm, they accepted the obligations of the impresario.

Sylvestre suggested that they should go and see the chorus get its money, and somehow he and Cecchetti and Drigo got mistaken in the crowd, and were paid as *coryphées*, so that they received not only their salaries as leading artists, but also as humble members of the company.

CHAPTER IV

THE changes which the ballet has made in music and which music has made in the ballet have always shown their relationship. Historically, instrumental music owes its origin to dancing, but the centuries have steadily brought about a forgetfulness of the fact. Even in the sixteenth century, when instrumental music first sprang into independent being, the debt which it owed to dancing was ignored. Up to that time composers were so busy devoting themselves to good part-writing they didn't bother to think about the tremendous effect which rhythm had on music. The old Netherlander composers were so academic, so busy with their part-writing and their technicalities, as to be blind to the fact that they were closing the veins of musical life.

Yet while these gentlemen were filled with pedantry, there were a whole number of unknown men writing dance tunes, which were played and sung with delight. They went on for nearly a hundred years, and suddenly the men of solid harmonies felt their influence. They began to recognize the nice effect which could be got by playing the tunes one after another, and to think something about contrast and balance. Then, hey presto! dances such as Corelli and Bach wrote burst upon the astonished world. They started the sonata, and the sonata mothered the symphony.

Many changes have happened since then. The idea of sympathy between the arts has been alternately

discarded and acknowledged. Byrd and Gibbons ornamented their dance tunes so highly that they were almost unrecognizable. Later composers seemed to make use of a title. A saraband of Bach, a minuet of Mozart, a mazurka of Chopin, were considered as compositions and not as dance music.

But a new generation has come to life. Composers have sprung up who have shown their readiness to devote themselves to the ballet. The serious-minded musician has awakened to the inspiration of the highly-equipped dancer. It needs a Stravinsky to collaborate with the choreographist, and a Pavlova or a Karsavina to show the supremacy of dancing.

Many, too, have been the changes which have influenced the way of producing a ballet. There was a time when the *maître de ballet* drew out the places for the dancers and the *corps de ballet* in chalk upon the stage. But as the chalk marks were easily rubbed out, and a man could not be expected to hold the scheme of a ballet in his mind for longer than his lifetime, ideas of writing ballets on paper, so that they could be preserved for generations, occupied producers. Cerito's husband, Saint Leone, invented a dancing stenography, which Cecchetti considers the best of the many attempts. Feuillet and Peccor wrote the next best; Sergeff is the author of another. The most satisfactory method in Cecchetti's estimation, and the one which he and his father have used, is a typography which was employed for years by the Italian ballet masters. It is a series of plans which shows the positions of the dancers on the stage and their movements. Amongst his collection of manuscripts Cecchetti has a number of ballets written by himself and his father. The story is set down in the neatest handwriting, followed by the choreography, showing every detail of the various figures.

Clothes and the ballet have also rung the changes in no small degree since Enrico Cecchetti first opened his eyes at the Tordinona Theatre in Rome. Long skirts have been shortened, new figures have been invented, and futurism in art has brought new fashions.

Dancers in the far distant years before his time had two models of dress assigned them: one was ornate, heavily plumed and hampering to the movements of the body. This was the type fixed for all heroic ballets. The other was a long-coated, long-skirted, much be-ribboned style of peasant dress, always worn for arcadian scenes.

In the early part of the eighteenth century people snorted and were scandalized at the brilliant French dancer Madame Sallé, when she first appeared on the stage in tights. No doubt it was a perilous experiment, yet the lapse of time has not done away entirely with "feeling" where tights are concerned. Only a short time ago a lady, who went to see the Russian Ballet at the Alhambra for the first time, remarked that she was "pleased to see they wore plenty of clothes!"

When Händel was manager at Covent Garden, and his rival Porpora was manager at the King's Theatre, in the Haymarket, Madame Sallé came up as a bone of contention between the two. Händel saw her in Paris and immediately offered her three thousand francs to appear in London. The moment Porpora heard this he offered Madame Sallé *three thousand guineas* to come to the King's Theatre. He suggested that, as she had not signed a contract with Händel, she was under no obligation to dance for him.

Being honest, and a woman of upright character, Madame Sallé replied: "And does my word count for nothing?" She kept to her first promise, and danced for Händel at Covent Garden before a public

that idolized her. Amidst the flotsam and jetsam of anecdote which surrounds her, it is said that enthusiastic spectators, who paid high prices to see her, had to fight their way to their places with their fists. The night she gave her benefit performance the public is reported to have showered the stage with purses of gold and jewels. In this way she gathered up over two thousand francs, an enormous sum for those days.

In spite of her success, there were many who continued to disapprove of her dancing; adverse critics who used Abraham Lincoln's speech about a certain book: "People who like this sort of thing will find it the sort of thing they like!" and carefully avoided the theatre.

Doubtless far more unpleasantness was created by Madame Tallien, another gifted French dancer, who not only wore tights, but introduced transparent fabrics for dancers' dresses.

Carmago, the brilliant and fantastic, who ran neck-to-neck in favour with Madame Sallé, possibly feeling bound to create a novelty, since her rival had done so, shortened the immoderately long ballet skirts, which hampered the movements of the limbs.

Both, however, were adored, and Voltaire wrote poetry about them:

"Ah! Carmago, que vous êtes brillante!
Mais Sallé, grand Dieu, est ravissante!
Que vos pas sont légères, et que les siens sont doux!
Elle est inimitable, et vous êtes nouvelle!
Les nymphes dansant comme vous
Et les Graces dansant comme elle!"

All the pictures of Maria Taglioni show that she wore ballet skirts, very demure in appearance and quite long. Unkind critics said she kept them that length because her legs were not quite straight. But this was not true; her length of ballet skirt was in fashion in those days, just as the flower-garden hat

and the hoop-skirt were in fashion in the 'sixties. To each other people have looked quite ordinary in each age, and the short ballet skirt of the present date might scandalize an audience of Taglioni's day. Whenever "Les Sylphides" had been put on in London during the seasons of Russian ballet, the long skirts, reaching to the ankles, gave a mid-Victorian air, and brought a vision of Taglioni as she appears in the various pictures which have been preserved of her when she danced in "La Sylphide" at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket in the palmy days of ballet in England. The dance which is indelibly associated with Taglioni's name has nothing to do with "Les Sylphides," which was such an astounding occurrence in the seasons of Russian ballet. The latter is taken from the second act of that *cheval de bataille*, "Giselle," which every great dancer has essayed since Carlotta Grisi. M. Fokine it was who separated the scene from its context, and turned it into an exquisite dream of plastic beauty to the music of Chopin.

In Cecchetti's younger days men dancers wore moustaches, and very bold and handsome they looked. When he shaved his off he looked so much like a priest in his straight, rather severe clothes that Italian caricaturists found him an easy prey for their sallies. Once he was drawn as a priest, and underneath the artist wrote in verse that M. Cecchetti, who was making such a stir at the theatre, resembled in private life, at his best a priest, and at his worst a sacristan!

The *ballerina* of Cecchetti's early triumphs wore stiff-boned corsets. Only thirty years ago the corseted ballet was general, and Cecchetti thinks that corsets ought not to have been discarded. Both he and Madame believe that boned corsets are good for dancers, both from the point of view of looks and of

health. However, he has never forced his opinion on his pupils, who all follow their own inclinations in this respect.

When Cecchetti danced at the Tordinona Theatre in Rome, he had to be very careful about his stage costumes. His Holiness and the Cardinals kept a strict and corrective eye on the clothes worn by the dancers, more especially on the colour of their tights. Flesh colour was sternly forbidden. White was approved, but white is not becoming! On the stage white is not at all effective.

Flesh-coloured tights being quite out of the question, Cecchetti got the happy idea of tights that matched his outer garments. And so he appeared in blue, and green, and mauve, and yellow, a novelty which pleased the Papal eye, and which was soon *à la mode* with dancers in Italy.

When Cecchetti first went to Petrograd to dance at the Imperial Theatre in 1887, the skirts of the *ballerinas* were worn very long. In Italy they were already short, and as the dancers arrived one by one, and roused a spirit of competition and imitation, they managed to introduce the fashion of their country. When Signora Virginia Zucchi came upon the scene—original, a brilliant dancer, with plenty of repartee and determination—she refused to wear the long ballet skirt which the wardrobe mistress brought her.

"Cut that down at once," she commanded.

"Impossible," said the mistress of the wardrobe. "This is the regulation length."

"Absurd!" retorted La Zucchi. "I cannot dance in that!"

Important officials were told, and they informed La Zucchi that at the Imperial Opera House the ballet skirts were under Imperial control; their length could not be changed in any way.

La Zucchi said nothing, but on the evening of her début she took up a large pair of scissors, and saying, "I *will* have my skirts short, I will *not* dance in clothes fit for a grandmother," cut them well above the knees.

The change made a great sensation, as might be expected, and though La Zucchi did not stop at the first snipping, but cut her skirts shorter and shorter, she was so admired and so much in favour that the irregularity was allowed to pass; indeed, it was accepted.

Most ballet dancers in Cecchetti's youth made their own stage clothes. When he and his mother and sister were touring together, there was always a vast amount of stitching to be done, for salaries were not much in those days, and a dancer's life was not the thing of flowers and bon-bons which the public is often pleased to imagine it.

Cecchetti, who always has the wit to appreciate the joke that goes against him, likes to recall the straits and difficulties of his early days.

"We had to be economical; we never had much money in our pockets, and as years went on we had less, because operatic singers demanded such high fees. When Tamagno was singing at La Scala the management paid him ten thousand francs a night, whereas a dancer occupying as good a position as Tamagno received about three thousand francs for the season of five weeks."

"If you have a ballet I will not sing," was a customary restriction when Tamagno was signing a contract.

Cecchetti, as one of the best dancers in Italy, was able to make a stand. He would not dance under five thousand francs for a season of five weeks, little enough, but at the present rate of exchange quite unthinkable.

Faced with constant opposition by operatic singers, the ballet was slowly but effectually ousted in Italy. Managers could not afford to engage good dancers; dancers could not afford to dance for the salaries offered.

During the great fight, the ballet in Italy went to its death, to seek a new home elsewhere, leaving the operatic singers to grow so continuously exacting that the impresario lost heart. Finally a cul-de-sac was reached, and no opening found by which to adjust, on a business basis, the demands of artists with those of the public.

While Cecchetti's mother and sister were busily sewing, he himself used to sit till the small hours of the morning copying the music of their dances with the utmost care. He bound it, kept it clean, made fresh covers, and repaired the wear and tear to which it was subjected by orchestral players during their travels.

On one of their tours in Italy he had taken more than ordinary precautions to put the score in order. Very proudly he took the parts to the *chef d'orchestre*. When the rehearsal started he listened with horrified surprise to the remarks of the conductor.

"Good Heavens! What writing! Who is the imbecile who has copied this music?"

A dancer's life at any date means excessive work. To-day the comforts of travelling and the facilities of getting about have lightened some of the fatigue which Cecchetti experienced when he was a young man. In Italy railway enterprise was in a fair way, but in some other countries it was less advanced. When he went with his mother and sister to fulfil engagements, first at Copenhagen and then at Christiania, railway travelling in Sweden and Norway was most confusing to the stranger who could not speak the language, because of

the many short lines and necessary changes. Copenhagen had several theatres and a ballet which was distinguished for its grace and elegance. At the Royal Theatre the best places cost about three shillings. The Tivoli, near the railway station, where Cecchetti danced with his wife at a later date, was a gigantic Cremorne. It was visited by all classes of society, who met and talked, and sipped coffee. The finest artists came there, and it was a striking feature of Danish outdoor life.

During his season at Copenhagen Cecchetti won success which took him back again and again. His first visit was uneventful; it was the trip to Christiania and back which brought about a chapter of accidents. Ignorant of the language and the customs of the country, Cecchetti, his mother and his sister went by packet boat from Copenhagen to Gothenberg. There they disembarked and took train to Christiania. The railway carriages were draughty, the speed about twelve miles an hour, the whole process most primitive. People who travelled inland drove in carrioles, others went by the mail-coaches, which carried mails and posted from town to town where the railway lines had not yet been laid. The season was Christmas, the cold excessive, and the accommodation at railway hotels, at all times limited, was just then insufficient. Cecchetti, however, did not trouble himself about reserving rooms at any station *en route*, as he was under the impression that the train would go straight through to Christiania. As the afternoon wore on and the sun set, he wrapped himself closer in his fur coat and looked out, confidently expecting to see the station at Christiania, and welcoming the thought of warmth and food.

Presently the train drew up. There was a general exodus. Cecchetti, his mother and sister descended, to find that it was not Christiania, but Laxa, the junction between Stockholm and Christiania. Had they to

change? When did the next train go? Should they have to wait long?

A courteous Norwegian traveller, who spoke French, replied to the questions. No, they could not change! There was no train to Christiania that night, as trains did not run at night! They would have to wait till the morning!

"Where was the hotel?" Cecchetti asked.

"There is the railway hotel. Have you booked rooms?"

"No!"

"You should have sent on a messenger to arrange for you. There is nothing left now!"

Faced with the possibility of passing the night in the snow, Cecchetti begged that some accommodation of some sort should be found for his mother and sister, and a lady came forward and offered to share her room with them. But for Cecchetti himself there was no place!

Again he shrank into the warmth of his friendly fur coat, and went out into the street, or rather on to the platform of the station, for Laxa at that date could hardly be said to boast of a properly made roadway. He walked up and down, wondering if he could find a sheltered corner where he might lie down and sleep. He was just contemplating a spot which looked possible, when a station official came towards him with a bunch of keys in his hand. He beckoned to Cecchetti, and pointed to the door. Conversation or explanation was impossible, and as the official's gestures were only capable of one interpretation, Cecchetti thrust his hands deep into his pockets and went outside. The key of the station door turned in the lock behind him!

Alone and in the darkness he speculated on the chances of being frozen to death, or of finding, even at that late hour, a place to shelter in. A little distance

away, across the snow, lights were gleaming cheerfully, and men's voices were audible. Cecchetti took his course in that direction and came upon a train which was standing on a siding. In the postal wagon officials were busy sorting and stamping. How homely, how comfortable, how attractive was the sight! Behind the postal wagon extended several first-class carriages. The brass handles on the doors were plainly visible, like jets of light.

"*Eccolo!*" exclaimed Cecchetti, and he jumped into one of the carriages, spread himself out on the cushions and fell asleep.

Seats in railway carriages don't make comfortable beds, and in those days the carriages were smaller, and the seating accommodation harder and narrower than now. So Cecchetti's was a troubled rest, disturbed by wrangles with fiendish impresarios, fights with wolves, impossibly extended pirouettes, which went on spinning like a phantom top that never stopped its course. Over the snow it went, with Cecchetti poised on its pinnacle, racing up mountains, tumbling through valleys, jumping streams, bumping, whirling, swaying, crashing . . . till . . . till . . .!

Cecchetti sat up, rubbed his eyes! He looked out of the window at the country-side, at the trees and snow-clad mountains which were passing him in rapid review! Good Heavens! It was morning, the sun was shining, the train was in full motion! As it dawned upon him that he was being rapidly carried away from Laxa, that he had in his pockets all the money and tickets belonging to himself and his mother and sister, Cecchetti no longer exclaimed "*Eccolo!*" but "*Corpo di Bacco!*" He opened the window and frantically tried to attract the attention of the guard or the engine driver, with no result. He made an effort to calculate the speed of the train and the possibility

ENRICO CECCHETTI
as the mother in "Giselle" and "La Fille mal gardée."

[*To face p.* 64.

of his being able to leap out and walk back to Laxa. He spent ten minutes in agonized suspense, followed by utter bewilderment as the train slackened speed, stopped, and then went backwards. Very soon it steamed into the station at Laxa, and there on the platform stood his mother and sister, quite calm and collected, with their bags and baggage round them. They were refreshed, quiet and unconcerned.

" Ah ! Where have you been, Enrico ? " his mother asked, as he leapt out of the train with melodramatic fervour.

" Where have I been ? " Words failed him.

His sister remarked calmly : " We were afraid you would miss the train."

Cecchetti laughed at the unconscious irony of the remark, and replied : " So was I, so I slept in it all night ! "

Then he picked up the bags, saw to the luggage, and realized that he had been unnecessarily upset, as the train had only proceeded along a branch line, to be shunted back on the main line.

The end of the journey was reached without further mishap, but there were other trials in store. Christiania at that date was a city of only seventy thousand inhabitants. It did not offer the scope or comforts of Copenhagen, and the public had not been afforded many opportunities of cultivating a taste for the ballet. At the chief theatre, which was about the size of the Haymarket, entertainments consisted chiefly of comedies from the French, with occasional operas—inefficiently performed—and legitimate drama. The interior was neatly arranged and decorated, the companies mostly composed of local talent. Performances started at 6.30 p.m. and lasted till 10 p.m.

The orchestra was good, and able and willing to play the music which Cecchetti brought to accompany

the *pas de deux, pas seuls* and ensembles with which he and his sister had delighted audiences in Italy, and the house was packed to see the novelty. Up went the curtain, and the two dancers started their performance, the first example of classical ballet which had been seen there. At the outset the audience was quiet, but presently titters were heard from various sides. The titters grew louder as the evening went on, and when Cecchetti executed some of the pirouettes for which he was renowned, they merged into laughter. It was the first experience of the kind that the two dancers had come upon, and they felt decidedly upset as the final curtain arrived. The applause was vociferous, but, considering what had gone before, it failed to cheer them.

In the wings the manager and a group of important people stood smiling. They were full of compliments. Ah, it was wonderful! Never before had such dancing been seen there! Surely they must be tired! The audience was overwhelmed with delight.

"'Overwhelmed with delight!'" Cecchetti repeated the phrase in astonishment.

"Indeed," said the Director, "they are enthusiastic about you!"

"'Enthusiastic?'"

"Most enthusiastic!"

"But—but, why then did they laugh at us?"

"Oh, that was only because they had never seen anything of the sort before!"

After that explanation the titters and laughter of the audience at Christiania were taken as a happy compliment; a shining evidence of appreciation of an art about which the public scarcely knew the alphabet.

Cecchetti maintains that a dancer can eat anything. There is no need for dieting. So long as food is taken some hours before dancing, anything and

everything is good to eat. In Christiania, however, the difficulty presented itself of obtaining the kind of meals that were to their taste. Cecchetti's mother liked to cook a good joint, but she had had no experience of frozen meat. She knew nothing about the methods of preparing it for cooking. The simplest and most obvious method to her mind was to plunge the food into boiling water. Every day she bought the best fish and meat and eggs procurable. Every day the ritual of a preliminary plunge into boiling water, and every day the horrible smell of putrid flesh came from the kitchen. It was only after dining with some ardent admirers that she discovered the reason. Frozen food must be put into *cold* water for several hours for the process of thawing. If put into *boiling* water it immediately decomposed. Unfortunately she only learnt this on the eve of departure, and Cecchetti's memory of his meals in Christiania consists mainly of coffee. Small wonder that he and his mother and sister welcomed the hour which took them back to Copenhagen.

They got into the train with great confidence, feeling that all the difficulties they had experienced in coming would be avoided, for of course they knew the ropes. They were fully instructed that they would have to change trains at Sala. Good! That was perfectly easy!

The journey proceeded, and they arrived at Sala. The train into which they were to change stood ready. Cecchetti found a carriage, placed the small luggage on the rack, and sat down. Really, how easy it was to travel, if one knew what to do!

Along the platform came an official, who opened doors, poked in his face at people and said something. He arrived at the compartment where the Cecchetti family were pleasantly looking forward to seeing

Malmö shortly. He opened the door and then said something unintelligible :

" Kan jeg ig mag dik di tig kom dag havel ? "

That's what it sounded like.

Cecchetti, quite at sea, shook his head.

" Kan jeg ig mag dik di tig kom dag havel ? "

This time Cecchetti, to make a change, nodded. The official immediately jumped into the carriage, seized all the small luggage which had been carefully stowed away, and placed it on the platform. He then made a gesture for the family to descend. They did so.

" Ph . . . eee ! " the official whistled, waved a flag, and off went the train, away and away into the far distance.

The path of those who travel in a strange country and do not speak the language is beset with difficulties. Cecchetti felt this as he stood on the platform at Sala and watched the last puff of the engine vanish into thin air. Apparently there was nobody to expostulate with, nobody to interrogate, nobody even to swear at, and the worst of it was that even if there had been, the worry of not being understood would have annulled all efforts of any kind. He looked round and saw a uniformed official disappearing through a door. He pursued him, and caught him by the shoulder.

" I want to go to Malmö," he announced in French.

The reply was of the " Ig mig dag kom " type. Cecchetti repeated his speech in Italian, in Russian, in German, only to be greeted with more polite " migs " and " igs." From various doors other officials issued and joined in the general efforts to understand. Presently Cecchetti was led by the arm to the telegraph office, where someone spoke French. There he stated he wanted to go to Malmö.

" But the train has just gone out."

" What ? "

"You should have gone by the train which has just left."

"*But I was in that train and the guard came and told me to get out!*"

"Impossible! Oh, what a misfortune; there is not another train to-day!"

"But I must go. I have an engagement in Copenhagen the day after to-morrow."

The station-master was called and had the situation explained to him, and with true politeness he endeavoured to repair the error of the well-meaning but too officious guard. A freight train was about to start for a small town which was on the road to Stockholm. If "Monsieur" and his ladies would go by that, they could catch a train to Malmö the following morning. He was excessively sorry, excessively courteous, and he carefully placed the three unfortunate travellers in the only available carriage—it happened to be an antiquated third-class monstrosity, of which all the windows were broken, and, from the jolting, the springs as well. The bitter cold air swept in icy blasts from end to end, and Cecchetti, seeing his mother and sister were shivering, took off his precious fur coat and wrapped it round them, contenting himself with a frayed piece of old carpet tightly clasped round him. *Tableau* indeed!

Towards the evening the poor frozen travellers arrived in a bewildered state at their destination. They were met by a man who took possession of their luggage, and signalled to them to follow him. At the hotel everything was ready for their reception: rooms for the ladies, a room for the gentleman, warmth, light, heat! Oh, how delightful it seemed! The proprietor and his staff endeavoured in every possible way to make the guests comfortable. Cecchetti was ushered to his bedroom with the utmost courtesy, and

he was touched to find that consistent politeness had even gone so far as to pay a tribute to his nationality, for lying open on the table was a volume of Tasso in Italian.

A good breakfast the next morning, a host paying special attention, and the demand for the bill, brought another evidence of Norwegian politeness.

"There is no bill," said the proprietor.

"No bill?"

"Certainly not. The station-master at Sala is paying all expenses!"

Outside the porter stood with the luggage, waiting to conduct the party to the railway station. They were placed in a comfortable first-class carriage, and carefully looked after till the end of the journey.

No wonder Cecchetti thinks the Norwegian character excessively gallant and most genuinely polite!

CHAPTER V

THE summer season of 1874 was a memorable one for Cecchetti; it was the year that first took him to Petrograd, where, at a later date, he was to be so intimately connected with the life of the ballet in that city.

After his visit to Christiania he had toured in Italy, Holland, Germany and Austria with repeated success. Needing a rest, Cecchetti went to Vienna to spend a little time with his brother, who, also a dancer, was fulfilling an engagement there. During his visit one of those curious premonitions which make busy people pause and wonder about the unseen mysteries of the Universe, came to Cecchetti. One night he had gone to bed early, and was sleeping soundly, when he started up in bed, hearing his brother's voice calling him. He replied, but there was no answer. He jumped up, went to his brother's room, but it was empty. Without any definite purpose, yet feeling impelled to do so, Cecchetti dressed himself and went out into the street, and in an absent-minded way wandered on. All the cafés were closed, the streets were dark, and the town wrapped in slumber. But although the shutters were up, there was still plenty of life in a certain café near by. Angry voices could be heard; amongst them Cecchetti recognized his brother speaking quickly and breathlessly.

Cecchetti hammered at the door with all his

strength. The turgid speeches continued. He called to his brother, he shouted and thumped, but to no effect as far as the inmates of the café were concerned. The sounds, however, attracted the police. They demanded admittance in the name of the law, but as their request received no answer, they burst their way through, and then Cecchetti knew why he had been impelled to rise from his bed and promenade the streets of Vienna at an unearthly hour. There stood his brother at bay, a knife clasped in his hand, a number of unpleasant-looking ruffians about to attack him. He was one man against half a dozen.

After the arrests had been made, and Cecchetti and his brother were returning home, he heard how a discussion with some Spaniards had grown so heated that an unequal fight was imminent, and but for Cecchetti's intervention might have ended tragically!

When he went to dance at Berlin, Cecchetti came into contact with Maria Taglioni's father, who was *maître de ballet* there at that time, and he met with some of the strictness which the illustrious daughter had experienced from her parent. Cecchetti had already heard a story of his severity from La Zucchi, who was also a pupil of Lepri. She had been engaged at the age of sixteen to dance the principal rôle in an old-fashioned ballet called "La Fille mal gardée." The music, by a long-forgotten composer, D'Aubervalle, had been brought up to date by Hertel, who was the conductor of the orchestra, and Taglioni had smartened up the choreography to suit the taste of the day. La Zucchi's first entrance was most important, but at rehearsals she utterly failed to satisfy the pedantic Taglioni. Over and over again he made her repeat it, until La Zucchi, whose temperament was quick and impatient, felt her anger rising.

"If I do not do it right this time," she exclaimed at

the fiftieth attempt, "I will go away and never return."

Fortunately her last effort was approved, and instead of going away, she remained to show her gratefulness to Taglioni, while he, on his side, recognized her gifts so fully that he saw in her a wonderful "Esmeralda." This ballet, as probably everyone knows, had been made famous by Grisi, for whom it had been written by her husband, M. Perrot, with music by Pugni, on Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame de Paris." The rôle was a tradition amongst dancers, and anyone who played it was subjected to the sort of criticism which is levelled at the actor or actress who attempts Shakespeare. Taglioni knew all the dangers, but he also had the judgment to know the talent to cope with them. Under his guidance La Zucchi's gifts were brought out, and her interpretation was so beautiful that it drew tears from the eyes of the audience.

There was much good dancing in Germany then. Berlin was fortunate in having Taglioni; in Dresden there was a fine school of dancing, from whence issued the wonderful Grimaldi, who was a pupil of one of the Italian teachers there by the name of Calore. After his engagement in Berlin Cecchetti went again to Denmark. He had just completed a second winter season at Copenhagen when an English manager saw him and asked him if he would not go to Petrograd and dance during the summer at one of the *théâtres d'été*, where Russians amused themselves after the great heat of the day. There were five theatres under Government then: the Great Theatre, which was devoted to Italian opera; the Marynski (Marie) Theatre, in the same square, where Russian opera and ballet were exclusively given; the Alexandra Theatre, in the Nevsky Prospekt, where Gogol's plays and those of other Russian dramatists were to be seen; the Michell Theatre, where

the most popular French and German comedies were performed; and the Bouffe Theatre, which amused its patrons with light opera and ballet.

But these were only open in the winter, and all the best artists who could be persuaded to go to Petrograd in the summer went to the open-air theatres, which were a mixture of restaurant and al fresco entertainment. While the audience sat at little tables and sipped tea, or something stronger, artists from all over the world amused them. Phillipo, the café *chanteur* whom Paris raved over just then, was there; Mdlle. Stella Bonheur; Madame Grendor, who was the wife of the *chef d'orchestre;* also the celebrated Hanlon Lee troupe, and Martinetti, the comic acrobat.

With his reputation as a fine dancer well established in Italy, Cecchetti's début in Petrograd had its significance in the history of the Russian ballet. The great days of Russian music and the ballet had yet to come, Tschaikovsky was earning his living by writing musical criticisms for the *Russky Veidomoste*, Rimsky-Korsakov was busy as inspector of Naval bands. The Russian School, with such disciples as Moussourgsky, Borodin and Cui, was struggling to assert itself. The soul of dancing was there, but it had to be awakened by the traditions of Italy, and it awaited the birth of such a genius as Anna Pavlova.

Petrograd audiences welcomed Cecchetti at once, and for six or seven years he returned to fulfil engagements. During that time the charm and fascination of Russia and the Russians grew upon him, and no journeys were more welcome than those which took him to Petrograd. One of the results of his visits was his invention of a *pas de deux*, which had a lasting success. This was "La Ciociara," which had its origin in two ragged Italian children whom Cecchetti saw in the streets at Petrograd. They were a quaint little

couple! The girl had a hoop round her on which several birds were perched, and in her hand a pack of cards, from which they drew and told people's fortunes. The boy had a concertina, from which he pumped out little scraps of Italian dance tunes. They were most picturesque, and Cecchetti, seeing the possibility of creating a novelty, went up to them and said: "If you will come to dinner with me every day for a week, I will pay you two roubles a time!"

Naturally the children were delighted to accept, and they turned up promptly. Cecchetti watched them and studied the details of their picturesque garments, more particularly their foot-gear, which gave the name to his dance. The *ciociara* is a sort of high sandal, just a big piece of rough leather folded over, brought high up the legs, and fastened with thongs. No stockings are worn, only a piece of linen folded in similar fashion. Cecchetti gathered up all the inspiration he could from the children and their clothes, then he set to work. For the concertina he substituted a violin, and for the birds and hoop the cymbals. A good musician wrote the music, into which the "Salterello," "Il Filone," and several peasant dances were introduced. For years this dance was the delight of audiences in Italy, and if it were not in the programme, it was sure to be called for. Many artists copied it, but it needed Cecchetti himself, and at a later date his wife, to give it its fullest success.

This was one of the earliest of Cecchetti's compositions. Later he wrote and produced many ballets, and his influence on the traditions of the ballet and its technique had been marked. The *pas de deux* on classical lines, which had been followed by Taglioni, started with an adagio, then a variation for the man, next a variation for the woman, and a finale for the two. A change was attempted by putting the allegro

first, followed by the two variations for the man and the woman, and finishing together in the accustomed manner. Cecchetti reversed the order, to much advantage. He started with a characteristic entrance, something light and fantastic, then had a variation for the man, and one for the woman, after which came the allegro together, ending with an adagio. This form was very popular. The composer wrote the music to suit the various movements and the demands of the dancer. So many bars for the introduction, so many for the variations, the allegro, the adagio. A ten-pound note would be his payment, rather a difference to the present ideas of remuneration! The scale has gone up, and eight hundred pounds would be nearer the mark to-day.

In the technique of dancing Cecchetti has also invented several new figures, which bear his name. The adagio movements have always been the most trying to dancers. Those invented by Blasis, and Cerito's husband, Saint Leone, and the long line of *maîtres de ballet* of the past are excessively tiring. Long pauses, lengthy poses, have taxed many a dancer. Cecchetti has modified a number of them. He created a *Pas de Chaconne*, which is known by his name. When the war ended he invented a new figure, which Madame Karsavina was the first to dance. This he named the *Pas d'Alliance*. Another adagio, which he created when he opened his school of dancing in London, is known as the *Pas de Mascotte*, and a third is the *Glissade de Mami*, named after a little black kitten which had just been presented to him for luck.

During those first years of Cecchetti's visits to Petrograd, Russia was honeycombed with secret societies. The spy scare made people careful of expressing opinions.

"Mind what you say," Cecchetti's Italian friends

warned him. "Don't talk politics; don't get drawn into conversations with strangers."

He laughed at the idea, and replied that he had nothing whatever to do with politics of any sort; he was a dancer pure and simple. But having been "put wise," as the Americans say, he was on his guard, and when the police were stamping his passport, he was excessively careful about answering their queries.

"You come from Italy?"

"Yes."

"A beautiful country, I have heard!"

"Indeed, yes!"

"At present politics are rather unsettled, eh?"

"I suppose so!"

"You are a well-known dancer there!"

"Y . . . yes!"

"You must know many people!"

"Some!"

"You are Roman; I suppose you have met Pio Nono?"

"I have seen him passing!"

"I understand that you are a great friend of Garibaldi!"

This was intended to be disconcerting. Cecchetti assumed a blank expression.

"Grimaldi, the dancer? No, he was before my time!"

"No, no. Garibaldi!"

"I don't know any dancer of that name!"

"Not a dancer. Garibaldi, the General!"

"I think I have heard the name, but I can't quite remember where! I am always so busy dancing and rehearsing that I have no time for social amusements."

The inspector looked at him curiously, then, with a curt "Good morning," ended the interview.

Elsewhere he met talkers who tried to lead him on

and get some kind of opinion on matters of the day, but Cecchetti, though by nature extremely frank, was shrewd enough to know when to be careful. His criticisms, which have always perhaps erred on the side of truthfulness, have invariably been reserved for his art, about which he knows no half-measures. Where that is concerned his principles are strong, and he takes nothing for granted. He despises all that is small and unworthy of attention in the technique of the ballet, and upholds those traditions which are occasionally considered by some to belong to an earlier generation only. But art must be built on tradition, or it has no foundation. This is what Cecchetti believes and practises, and though he is strict he is ever ready to receive new impressions.

CHAPTER VI

WHILE Cecchetti was fulfilling his engagements in Russia, Italy was being introduced to a young dancer named Signorina Giuseppina de Maria. She had been a pupil of Lepri in Florence, and having arrived at a point when she was fit to make her professional début, she obtained an engagement at the Teatro Royale in Florence. She was a handsome girl, straight and agile, frank in bearing. Like all young débutantes, her first appearance was an event which assumed immense importance to her family, her friends and herself. Everyone buzzed round her, admonishing, advising, suggesting. "No, Pippina, listen to me! . . ." "Pippina, don't! . . ." etc. Amongst them came the friend who rejoiced in worldly wisdom, who had no faith in the simple-heartedness of the public or its capacity to select.

"Listen to me! An artist may be a heaven-sent genius, but nobody will believe it unless you tell them so!"

"Well, well, you needn't waste words! . . ."

"You must have a *claque!*"

The announcement was received in palpitating silence! A *claque!* That horrible false applause for which an artist paid!

"Why not? Every Italian theatre has its *claque*," replied the friend; "there is not a dancer or an actor or actress who can do without the *claque!*"

The idea was repugnant to a débutante whose youth-

ful ambition aspired to win by merit alone. Let the audience choose for itself, she would stand or fall by its decision.

But, as the day drew near, this impulsive freshness of youth was overruled, and Signorina de Maria succumbed to the worldly advice which had been given her. With much care and circumspection she calculated the amount she could afford to spend on her *claque*. It amounted to twenty francs, which would admit eight people at two francs fifty each !

The ballet in which she was to make her début as *première danseuse* was a *divertissement* introduced into the opera " Il Guarnay," by Gomez. She was supported by a *corps de ballet*, and her exit was arranged so that she gently faded away in their midst.

Well, the evening came. She danced, she receded from the stage into the background. Not one hand-clap was heard in the house ! It was as though she had never appeared at all.

Where was the *claque* for which she had handed out twenty francs ?

In a state of rage she went to her dressing-room, vowing she would never again spend money on *réclame*. " Of course," she said to herself, " the wretched people had never come to the theatre at all. They had spent the money in eating ! "

Presently, however, someone who knew the " wretched people " came to her and cleared up the mystery. It appeared that her exit had been so ineffectual that not only the *claque*, but the audience thought she was returning to dance again, hence the tomb-like silence !

The next night the finale was altered, and Signorina de Maria got her full measure of applause, not from her *claque*, for she had none, but legitimately, from her public.

Since that day she has stuck to her principles and never spent money on *réclame*.

On the day following her first appearance the pupil had to face her master's criticisms. Lepri had been there to see her début, and he was primed with comments.

"You are an artist!" this was thrown at her like a ball from a cannon; then, "*but* oh! . . . your *battements sur le cou de pied* . . . how you must *work* them . . . and your *arabesque* with your body all *doubled* up . . . oh . . . and . . . etc., etc!"

All excellent for the pupil who is in earnest, but devastating to the student who is not thorough.

Soon after her début at Florence, Signorina de Maria was engaged to dance for a season at Nice, and in several towns in Italy, and then came an offer from the Teatro Nationale, in Florence. She was not at all keen on taking the engagement, the salary was not good, and she felt that in returning she was going over old ground. Cechi Baldassarre, who was then managing the theatre, and who was another impresario of the type of Jacovacci, said to her: "What! you don't want to come?"

"No!"

"Do you realize you will be dancing with the great Cecchetti?"

She was not anxious.

"But it will mean a great deal to you!"

Baldassarre was a wonderful man of business, and there were few artists he could not manage, besides which he had a reputation for putting on opera and ballet that ranked as the best in his day. He had the knack of judging the public taste, and he kept his prices down. A box seat was about three francs, stalls two francs, and entrance twenty-five centimes. His ignorance about the art in which he dealt was colossal. He had made it his habit to stand at the door of his theatre every evening and watch his company arrive.

In his orchestra he had a fine clarinettist named Biamboni, whose name was well-known as the inventor of an instrument called the Biambonino. One night as he entered Baldassarre beckoned to him.

"Good evening, Signor Biamboni!"

"Good evening, Signor Baldassarre!"

"I want a word with you. Tell me, why don't you play in the orchestra?"

"But I do. I am never absent!"

"No, no, Signor Biamboni; you do not always play in the orchestra. I was in the stage box the other night and watched you. While all the others were playing, you did nothing!"

"Ah, but that was because I had so many bars' rest!"

Baldassarre shrugged his shoulders. "That is impossible; in my orchestra there can be no rests. You must play all the time, or I shall have to deduct something from your salary."

Baldassarre's persuasions, coupled with those of her friends, overruled Signorina de Maria's objections, and she accepted his offer.

The ballet was "Il Figlio di Cheope," written by Montplaisir, with music by Constantio dall' Argine, who could compose deliciously for the dance, but who had a vaulting ambition to write opera. He chose for his first subject Rossini's *chef d'œuvre*, "Il Barbiere," and took the libretto from that opera as it stood. Comparisons were easy to make, and the opera was a fearful fiasco. But, nothing daunted, he went to the attack again, this time taking his libretto from Bellini's "Norma." That was the death of him as an opera writer.

Signorina de Maria danced with the celebrated Enrico Cecchetti, but the season was not a good one, and the impresario gave it up. The company suggested

carrying on, but Signorina de Maria had to go back to Nice to dance. She went to the ill-fated Grand Theatre Royal, which seemed predestined to be burnt. Several small outbreaks occurred at various times, and one took place whilst she was dancing.

The house was full and the ballet in progress, when cries of "Fire" multiplied on every side. Two of the *ballerinas* who were dancing with Signorina de Maria jumped into the orchestra; others rushed into the wings. The audience stampeded in aimless directions. People jumped on the seats, they pushed and crowded, and Signorina de Maria suddenly realized that she was standing quite alone, and quite unmoved in the middle of the stage, saying: "Keep calm, keep calm, I beg of you. There is no danger. Keep calm, I entreat you!"

At the back of the house the chief mechanic had discovered the fire in Signorina de Maria's dressing-room. Someone had been in to see themselves in the looking-glass, holding a candle, and the numerous stage dresses hanging round the room had caught fire. The room was all wood, and the flames spread quickly, but were eventually checked and put out.

When order was restored, and the Director announced that there was no danger, and the performance would continue, the public realized that the young girl on the stage had never moved and never ceased to entreat everyone to be "Calm!" She was still there as they went back to their places, and with one mind they gave her an ovation.

Two years later, the theatre was burnt to the ground amidst heart-rending scenes.

Cecchetti in the meantime remained at Florence. He was fired with the idea of management. He had saved a little money and thought he would like to try his hand at management, and perhaps find success

where there had been failure. To that end he addressed the company, paid them the weeks that were owing them, and proposed that, instead of sharing, he would put them all on the salary list. His scheme was a constant change of programme, and to this end he worked like a nigger. Unfortunately the counter-attractions were very powerful. The first performances of "La Favorita," with the noted singer Galetti, were drawing packed houses to the Pagliamo Theatre; a company from Paris was creating a sensation with the latest comedies at another theatre. Cecchetti, as a last resource, tried lowering his prices, but it was a bad move, for it practically emptied the house. When he could hold out no longer, he closed the season, *twenty thousand francs* out of pocket.

After the fiasco at Naples, Cecchetti went again to Petrograd, then to Naples, then to Petrograd, and again to Naples, and to this place came Signorina de Maria also. She was engaged as second *ballerina*, and Fräulein David, a German dancer, had been engaged as *prima ballerina*. The latter was a good, sincere artist, but her appearance was considerably against her. She had a big body, a big head, a large mouth, and long, thin legs. Elsewhere she had won much approval; not so that tiresome Neapolitan audience. They gave a frank demonstration of disapproval on the first night. They yapped, and snarled like dogs after a rat, and poor Fräulein David's engagement was brought to an abrupt end. The management hastily gathered in Signorina de Maria and put her in the place of the unfortunate artist. The prospect of dancing before such a public was not a pleasurable anticipation for her, added to which, hasty rehearsals and hard work brought a painful abscess on her heel. She trembled to think of the rebuff that might be awaiting her.

The ballet was " Rolla," by Manzotti, already famous as a composer of ballets in Italy. It bore the name of the young artist who was the central figure of the story. Signorina de Maria was the good genius, who watched over him and brought his brother (played by Cecchetti) to the market place, where Michael Angelo discussed the art competition and deplored the lack of talent which was being shown. While he spoke (in gesture) he noticed a ragged boy holding a statuette. He called the lad and asked him where he had got it. The boy said it was the work of his brother, and Michael Angelo, impressed by the talent it showed, purchased it of the boy, to whom he gave a purse of gold.

Then followed one of the great moments of the evening, in which the public revelled and came night after night to witness. It was the *tour de force* which roused the cries of " *Eccolo !* " (There he is !) when Cecchetti came on the stage, then, as the moment drew near : " *Guarda, guarda !* " (Now, now !), and when it finally arrived : " *Ecco !* " (There !)

This was what caused the excitement. When Cecchetti as the boy received the purse of gold, he was overcome with gratitude and anxious to return to his brother immediately. He leapt up a high staircase at one bound, a terrific feat accomplished by no other artist of his day or since !

In the second act Michael Angelo came to the brothers' house. He looked round and saw a drawn curtain, which he pulled aside and revealed a large statue of a young girl, which he viewed with delight. He was intently gazing at it, when someone drew attention to a defect. Angelo took up one of the sculptor's tools lying on a little table, and with one blow rectified the error.

The story went on to a happy ending, while Cecchetti danced superbly, and Signorina de Maria, with

a heel that was causing her agony, nevertheless found her way into the heart of the Neapolitan audience, and into someone else's heart also.

The rôle of Michael Angelo was played by Bologometti, whom Cecchetti remembers with enthusiasm as an *artiste mime* of the foremost rank, at a time when the art of *mime* was in its prime. Gesture in those days was a language which told a story without words to perfection. At rehearsals the word was given by the producer, the *artiste mime* interpreted it, but never uttered it. The grimaces which often accompany gesture on the contemporary stage would have been hissed and hooted forty years ago.

Yet, for all the mistakes which are made now, the *artiste mime* of great gifts and technical perfection is not so very far away from this century after all. When Jane May descended upon London in " L'Enfant Prodigue," mimic art had a revival! Who will ever forget the charm of that performance; and who, too, will ever forget Cecchetti's delightful comedy *mime* as the Marquis di Luca, in " The Good-Humored Ladies," at Covent Garden, and Madame Cecchetti's Marquise Sylvestra in the same production, or his satirically humorous Majordomo in " Scheherazade? "

It is in such productions that Cecchetti has shown the traditions of *mime* in Italy, where it has been upheld and taught by such famous artists and teachers as Gamberini, Monticini, Ramaccini, Cuccoli, Bologometti, Santalicante, and last, but not least, by Egidio Rossi, who took the name part in " Rolla," and who was playing in London at the Prince of Wales' Theatre in the 'eighties in " L'Histoire d'un Pierrot," for which Michael Costa had written very pretty music. Somehow it did not please at the time. Rossi's delicious *mime* as the concierge was barely recognized, and the delicate story of Pierrot's love for a little modiste did

not attract the public. The artlessness of Pierrot's shy love-making; the expressive scene where the concierge got the wax head—part of the stock in trade of the modiste of those days—and showed Pierrot how to propose; the scenes which followed the lesson; Pierrot's resort to gambling; his downfall and desertion of his wife; his departure and return, were quite as appealing as "L'Enfant Prodigue," which it resembled; but it failed to rouse interest.

Rossi and Cecchetti were firm friends as young men. For a long time they shared rooms, and at most theatres they were engaged together, Cecchetti as *primo ballerino* and Rossi as *primo mimo*. The two young men were up to all sorts of wild pranks and practical jokes, which Cecchetti recalls with affectionate regret.

"Ah, yes, how well I remember our playing at Casale-Monferrato, when he was nineteen and I was a year younger. We had finished our evening's work at the theatre, and Rossi said: 'Let's go to the station and have some supper; all the restaurants in the town are closed.' When we got to the station there was a train about to start. Rossi jumped in; I followed. 'Where are we going to?' I asked. 'I don't know,' said Rossi; 'we shall see presently.' But we did not know our destination until early morning, when we arrived at Vercelli, warm and beautiful in the sunshine, busy with the coming and going of industrious folk, of heavy carts and sturdy horses taking vegetables and fruit to the market square. We followed the bustling throng, and Rossi, with his usual irresponsible high spirits (for want of something better to do), started buying vegetables as though he intended to lay in a stock for months to come. I followed his lead and purchased huge peppers, big carrots—oh, what a picture they were!—olive-green artichokes and luscious melons, quantities of everything that we came upon.

"'Well,' said Rossi, his arms full to overflowing. 'What do you say to our having supper now?'

"I said, 'Not supper, breakfast!'

"'How can we have breakfast when we have not yet had our supper?'

"He insisted on our having the *café au lait* we had started out to get the night before, then we returned to the station, found a convenient train about to start for Casale-Monferrato, and arrived there in time to go to the theatre and attend the rehearsal. All the way back Rossi had been thinking out a plan for disposing of the vegetables, and of playing a practical joke on the *maître de ballet*. 'You know,' said Rossi, 'he is very anxious to get an engagement out of Italy. Now, we will pack these vegetables in a valise, and you must disguise yourself as my brother, who has just arrived from Berlin. Come to the theatre and I will introduce you!

"Rossi went off to the theatre alone; I did not quite like it, because we were both making love to the *prima ballerina*, and I felt he would have the field to himself; however, I went home, cut off my moustache, darkened my face, put on smoked glasses, a long, correct frock coat, and a felt hat. I packed all the vegetables in a valise, and betook myself to the stage door.

"'Good morning,' I said politely to the man, who generally knew me well.

"'Good morning,' he replied, without any sign of recognition.

"'Is there a Signor Rossi here?'

"'Yes!'

"'Could I see him?'

"'He is at rehearsal now.'

"'I am his brother; you would do me a great kindness if you would let him know that I am here.'

"'Oh, ah!' said he, and he went at once.

"He returned, saying that 'Signor Rossi was beyond words delighted; would I come to him on the stage, at once.'

"I went, and he received me effusively; introduced me to the *prima ballerina*, and to the *maître de ballet*, who, the moment he heard I had come from Berlin, gave me a chair beside him and plied me with questions as to the chances of an opening there; what was the ballet like? were there many good dancers? did they like foreign artists? etc. Would I give him the pleasure of lunching with him? we could talk better?

"Rossi came and took up my valise. 'Oh!' said he; 'what have you got in here? It is very heavy.' He let it fall with a bump, and it flew open, and out of it burst the vegetables, like so many birds from a cage.

"Of course everybody's suspicions were roused, and Rossi seized me, pulled off my glasses and my wig, and the joke was taken in good part, even by the *maître de ballet*, who, like the rest, went home with some of the spoils Rossi and I had brought from the market at Vercelli.

"Quite a silly story, isn't it? but so amusing at the time. Rossi, in spite of his jests, never found anyone cherished a grudge against him for his mischief. He was really very generous-hearted, and excessively popular.

"This was proved on another occasion in an astounding manner at La Scala. It happened that there was a member of the *corps de ballet* called Vismara. He used to come to rehearsals dressed up to the nines: elegant frock coat, kid gloves, and a remarkably high top hat, which he always placed with sedulous care on the velvet ledge of the stage box. I always noticed that Rossi eyed the hat curiously. It seemed to have an almost magnetic attraction for him, and

under his breath he murmured : ' I shall do it ; I know I shall ; I shall do it ! ' I did not pay much attention to his meaning, but one morning I saw him steal over to the box, take the hat when nobody was looking, and carry it away behind his back. He was absent for a short time, then he returned as carefully as he had gone, and put the hat back in its accustomed place. At the end of the rehearsal Vismara buttoned his coat, straightened himself, smoothed on his gloves, and went for his hat. He took it up, then jumped back, with a horrified gasp, placing his hand over his nose. ' Good heavens, ugh ! Where is the *maître de ballet ?* Where is the Director ? ' It happened that the Director of the Scala, the Marchese Estense Caleagnini, who was a man of great distinction and came of a noble family, was on the stage at the moment. Vismara rushed to him and placed the hat under his nose, gesticulating fiercely. The Marchese jumped back as Vismara had done, and stuffed his handkerchief over his nose. ' Take it away ; take it away ! ' ' Someone has done this ! ' Vismara shouted. ' They have deliberately put rotten eggs into my hat. It is too bad ; it is a shame ! ' and all the time he was speaking either he or the Marchese were warding off the terrible smell which was offending their nostrils, dancing round the hat as though it was a powder magazine on the point of exploding.

" After the first excitement had died down, the question of who had done the deed had to be seriously considered. The Marchese retired to his office, Vismara carried away his unpopular hat, and a great deal of interrogation was gone through, but nobody knew who was the culprit. ' Very well, then, if nobody knew, the only way to administer justice was by fining every member of the *corps de ballet* five francs ! '

" When Rossi heard this he was distressed beyond

words. That his friends at the theatre should suffer for his pranks was horrible to think of! He went straight to the Marchese, and confessed that the devil of mischief had taken possession of him, and it was he who had put the rotten eggs in the hat.

"'Impossible,' said the Marchese, smiling blandly at Rossi; 'I don't believe you.'

"'But I tell you I did do it. I'm very sorry; you mustn't let the others suffer for me.'

"'Nonsense, Rossi; you must not let your kind heart run away with you. I'm sure you didn't do it.'

"'But I tell you I did, and I am willing to pay the fine for the whole company.'

"'You are a good fellow,' said the Marchese; 'but really I don't see why you should incur such a lot of expense just because you feel sorry for your comrades.'

"Rossi argued and insisted, but the Marchese refused to look upon him as anything else than an altruist. Nevertheless, he gained his point, and paid the fine for the whole *corps de ballet*, and he gave Vismara a new top-hat. To this day nobody believes that Rossi was the perpetrator of the practical joke."

Rossi is still alive. He is now manager of a big cinema at Rome, and when he and Cecchetti meet they go over the escapades of the days of their youth, and recall how they made up their minds to economize when the price of cigars went up. They started by buying pipes of the best quality at thirty francs each and superlative tobacco, all of which worked out at a far higher rate than the cigars would have done, even at their advanced price. One of their choice memories goes back to an evening at Casale-Monferrato after the performance at the theatre was over. Rossi and Cecchetti, and two or three kindred spirits, met at supper, and when they started to go home, in the

early hours of the morning, changed their minds, for the air was soft and the stars were shining, and they had not reached the sober age of going to bed and getting up at conventional hours. "Let's go and see the furnaces at Bassano," said Rossi. "Yes, let's go," said Cecchetti.

Bassano was not many miles away. It was noted for its bricks, and down in the valley there were numbers of factories, where the fires glowed in the darkness. At night it was a picturesque spot, and the men who stood at the doors of the great ovens were glad enough to talk to any strangers who might come that way. They welcomed, too, the bottles of wine which Rossi and Cecchetti brought them. The town of Bassano itself straggled up the mountain side, from the heights of which there was a lovely view. Rossi, not satisfied with the visit to the valley, wanted to climb and see the sun rise. Cecchetti was quite ready, and while the rest went back he and Rossi started on their journey. It was a climb that tried even the well-developed muscles of the two young dancers, and the way was made longer because of the heavy fog which came down upon them half-way up. They tumbled about, scarcely able to see each other. Where were they? Where were they going to? "Rossi, are you there?" "Hey! Cecchetti, where are you?" "Shall we go back?" "Do you know the way?" "No!" "Then what is the use of talking about it?"

They pushed on, and presently had the good fortune to get into the clear air above the fog. The sun was rising, and over the bank of mist they could see for miles. This was pleasant enough, and they arrived at the top in high spirits, but very tired and hungry. Both Rossi and Cecchetti, it must be noted, were extremely dandified young men. They had an

air of prosperity and authority which often deceived, and when they jauntily walked into a farm that morning and asked if they could have a glass of milk, the peasant folk took them for very important people. The milk was brought, and Cecchetti asked some questions about the life there, the property, the state of agriculture, to all of which he got obsequious answers.

"Yes, Signor . . . no, Signor . . . indeed, Signor. . . . It is most kind of the Signor to trouble himself to take the journey. We are most honoured by the Signor's visit. . . . It is not often that proprietors take the trouble to look after their property at such great inconvenience to themselves. No . . . no, there was nothing to pay . . . the Signor was only too welcome, and his tenants would long remember his coming."

When Rossi and Cecchetti had started on their way back, Rossi doubled up with laughter.

"They take you for their landlord—they think you are a big landed proprietor—that is why we had nothing to pay; but, listen, I will bet you anything you like that I will get breakfast for nothing. We will go to Treville. Come!"

Rossi's eyes were full of mischief.

"But where is Treville?" asked Cecchetti.

"Didn't you see it there from the top of the mountain? They pointed it out to you—the little town with the church!"

"But you know nobody there? How are you going to get a free breakfast?"

"That you will see," Rossi answered, as he proceeded briskly down the mountain.

When they got to Treville, Rossi at once went to the church which he had seen from the top of the mountain. It was characteristically Italian, with its

golden images, its holy utensils and its sacred pictures, all of which had a look of age. Rossi went round the church, making enthusiastic comments on their beauty. Presently he came upon the aged sacristan and button-holed him.

"Good morning, good morning; what a beautiful church, and what handsome pictures!"

"Si, Signor!"

"Many of them very valuable, I should say?"

"Ah, the Signor is a connoisseur!"

"Indeed, my friend and I belong to a committee which is going all over Italy to purchase antiquities. Now that picture of the Holy Virgin—do you think I might persuade the good father to sell it to me? I would pay twenty thousand francs for it."

The sacristan trembled a little at the thought of there being so much money in the world; then he suggested that the Signor should himself see the priest.

"Good!" said Rossi; "nothing I should like better."

Round he went to the house of the priest, Cecchetti following behind, wondering what was the meaning of this latest mad prank, and where it would lead.

The sacristan stopped at a humble dwelling, and the aged priest received them with a kindly smile. They were representatives of a committee to buy antiquities. Ah, the Church was poor; there was never enough to assist the needy of the parish; perhaps . . . he did not know. The Signor and his friend must first get permission of the Mayor.

Rossi was delighted!

This time the priest himself conducted the distinguished members of the "antiquarian committee," and explained their mission to the most important man in Treville. He was at once excessively taken

with the idea. Rossi mentioned large sums of money which he was willing to pay for various pictures and carvings. The Mayor positively swelled with delight.

"Would the Signors honour him by taking breakfast with him? It was just the hour; then they could further discuss the idea."

Of course the Signors were delighted, and they ate heartily, and thoroughly enjoyed the Mayor's hospitality.

At the conclusion Rossi said that he must hasten on with his inspection, as he had far to go, and his report would have to be made within the month.

The Mayor beamed with importance and goodwill. The Signor would not find them difficult to deal with; the parish needed money, and he would be glad to think there was a possibility of helping the poor. He shook hands warmly with Rossi and Cecchetti, and the two started on their way back to Casale-Monferrato on foot, because there were no carriages and no railway. Both the young men were brimming over with suppressed laughter, but Cecchetti was a little sobered by the thought that there was a possibility of their not reaching the theatre in time for the performance. The walk was long and tedious, and it was late when they reached the nearest railway station, and a train which would start shortly. But it didn't! It was behind time, and Cecchetti and Rossi watched the sun go down and the darkness fall in a state of feverish anxiety. Good heavens! They were going to pay dearly for their fun! The evening was growing late; the hour had long passed when they should have been at the theatre.

When they arrived it was half-past nine! They tore through the streets to the stage door of the theatre. It was closed! They scampered round to the front of the house. It was closed! On the door

a notice was pasted! In their excitement Cecchetti and Rossi could scarcely read it, but after a second they turned away with relieved faces and hearts that beat once again. The theatre was closed that evening on account of the illness of the *prima donna*. There was no performance!

Painfully and slowly they went home and to bed. Cecchetti slept thirty-eight hours, and nobody could wake him. When he was finally roused to go to the theatre to dance, he was so stiff he could scarcely move, and his dancing that night was a thing of pain and misery.

When he tells the story he always shakes his head. "I have given up mountain climbing since that day!"

In addition to his great gifts as an artist *mime*, Rossi possessed a magnificent baritone voice, and he had a secret ambition to become an opera singer. His knowledge of music, however, was so negligible that he found it very difficult to sing with orchestra; added to this he was fearfully nervous. As a rule, he lost half his voice through sheer fright. Still he aspired, and buoyed up by the confidence of his father and his friends, he made his début at a small theatre in a little town near Milan.

The opera was "Trovatore." Rossi was cast for the baritone part, and rehearsals were called. People who have little knowledge of music generally think that safety lies in going straight ahead. This was Rossi's policy, and the effect on the ensemble and on the conductor of the orchestra can be well imagined. In the first act, where he should have made an important pause, he continued singing. The conductor stopped him.

"M. Rossi. You must do like this: 'La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la . . . ! La, la, la!'"

Rossi said very well.

"La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la," then, to accentuate the pause, he struck himself on the chest.

"No, no!" said the conductor; "you mustn't hit your chest like that!"

"But if I don't strike my chest I shall never remember it!"

"Very well, then you must do it behind your back."

Rossi repeated the phrase: "La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la." Then he turned his back to the audience and thumped it with his fist.

The conductor remonstrated once again, and induced Rossi to keep his face to the audience while he thumped his back to remind himself of the pause.

When the night of the performance came Rossi was deadly nervous. Nobody would have imagined that he had a really beautiful voice, exquisite in timbre, and resonant. His friends were all wishing him well from the front of the house; his father, who was playing in the orchestra, was bursting with pride.

The moment came for the much rehearsed pause. Rossi started excellently: "La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la . . .!" Then paused with a fine gesture, thumping neither his chest nor his back.

The conductor, with a relieved sigh, waited, but the voice of Rossi's father, quivering with pride, filled the silence. "'Tis my son, my son!"

After that Rossi's nerves failed him completely.

Outside the art of the flesh and blood *mime*, Cecchetti and his friend Rossi always had the greatest affection for the wooden *mime*—those marionettes that had their own theatres in every town in Italy. Those manipulated dolls, who strutted the stage with the confidence of the full-fledged actor, imitated the "stars" of the day, and the companies were made up of "leads" and "supers" on the same system as the legitimate theatre. Paragraphs used to appear in the papers

about the doings of this or that marionette. Once a *prima ballerina* broke her leg, and it was humorously announced that "Signora ——!" had gone to *Legnano* (which means wood) to have a new one adjusted. The popular ballets and operas of the day were put on at the Italian marionette theatres. In Florence, Cecchetti saw Manzotti's "Excelsior," also "Brahma" and "Aïda." In the last, the big spectacle of the entrance of the victorious armies was happily accomplished by the line of soldiers having their right feet firmly attached to a long board, while their left legs were free to move. The strip of wood was drawn jerkily across the stage, and the company of men marched in, their left legs and arms swinging in perfect time to the music.

When Cecchetti and Rossi were performing at the Scala in Milan, they used to go to the Girolamo Marionette Theatre whenever they could spare the time, and once they added to the amusement of the performance by showing their admiration for the *prima ballerinas*. They took a box on each side of the stage, and they made disgraceful eyes at the wooden *ballerinas*, Cecchetti selecting the fair one, and Rossi the dark. They sat well forward, applauded their favourites outrageously, and threw them bouquets, much to the delight of the audience.

Talking of *mime* and the cinema, Cecchetti considers that gesture as seen on the screen to-day is merely pantomime. He is not a great admirer of Charlie Chaplin; he thinks that Max Linder is about the finest comedian that he has seen amongst cinema artists.

As for dancing? That is well-nigh impossible to reproduce. The movements of a dancer are too quick to be recorded without blurring; even photographs of set positions are rarely accurate. There is something about the camera that distorts, and gives a wrong version.

The study of the art of *mime*, in Cecchetti's estimation, should be of assistance to the cinema artist; it might be possible to make their actions so perfect that there would be no need to use captions; gesture would give the whole story, as it did in the days of ancient Rome, when actors performed in the big amphitheatres. That was, in reality, the supreme epoch of the artist *mime*, and one of the finest actors must have been he whose place in the funeral cortège was immediately behind the bier. It was his mission to act in gesture the life and thoughts of the man who was dead!

CHAPTER VII

IT is said that all Romans have a family resemblance, one to the other. The men are mostly small, like the subject of these memoirs, and, like him, they have a simplicity of character which, though it likes peace, is quick and virile; hating and loving strongly and to some purpose. With such a temperament, friends and enemies are quickly made, and Cecchetti as a young dancer of twenty-two had a good selection of both. The novel effects which he introduced, his agility, the perfection of his technique—and his good looks—kept people's tongues wagging, and the pens of the newspaper world active. When he became engaged to a young lady in Cevetanova, he was overwhelmed with congratulations, and he worked harder than ever to add to the little fortune which he had already gathered together. Time passed, but the marriage for one reason and another was deferred. More time went by, little differences sprang up between the engaged couple, and during eight years kept on recurring.

At the height of these misunderstandings Cecchetti met Signorina Giuseppina de Maria at Naples, and, after dancing with her in "Rolla," he was rapidly falling in love with her. He insisted on her coming to Copenhagen with his mother and sister, where they had a brilliant season, and finally, with complete frankness, he told her that he was engaged, but not happily. The

young lady in Cevetanova had written him letters which were far from satisfactory.

"I am going back to her now," he announced, "and if my engagement is broken off, then I shall come to your family in Rome and ask for your hand in marriage."

Signorina de Maria did not pay much attention to the speeches of a hot-headed young man, and she declares that she went home and thought no more about him.

Cecchetti, however, was in earnest and acted promptly. He went back to Cevetanova, found that his fiancée showed a decided preference for someone else; letters were returned, rings exchanged, and then he ran to the railway station and took the train to Rome. He went straight to the house of Signorina de Maria, and briskly asked her father if he would permit him to marry his daughter. With equal readiness the father said: "NO!" He had very different projects for his daughter's future. He had no wish for her to marry a dancer.

Cecchetti bowed. "Very well. I have done what I said I would. I promised to come and make the offer the moment I was free. Now it is finished, I will return to Florence."

Back he marched to the railway station, very definite and assured. The train did not start for quite an hour, and he waited about the platform, watching the gathering crowd of travellers, and feeling that sufficient to him were the things of the day, but that other days would bring further developments. He looked at the people round him, and presently could not take his eyes away from a young girl who was standing a few paces from him. Yes, he was right, it . . . it was Signorina de Maria!

"I am going back to Florence to have some more lessons of Lepri," she told him.

They got into the train together, and they talked long and rapidly throughout the night, oblivious of their fellow-passengers, who glared at them, and entreated them to be quiet so that they could sleep.

What a lot there is to discuss when an obdurate parent has said "No," in capital letters! The father's refusal, the young man's determination, the future, the past, the present, the possibilities, obstructions; and the young man was genuinely in love; that was absorbing enough in itself.

When they arrived at Florence Signorina de Maria began to understand Signor Cecchetti, and to think seriously about him. She went to Lepri's school again for a time, but Cecchetti had an engagement to dance in Berlin, and she had an offer also. So they went off happily, with oceans more to discuss, and the future looking very pleasant indeed when viewed jointly, so pleasant, in fact, that they decided to forget about the "No" which had been said in Florence, and get married in Berlin.

Cecchetti went to the Italian Consulate to make the arrangements, but it took such a long time to get the necessary documents through from Italy that the ceremony was driven to the last hour before their departure for Venice. In frantic haste the young couple rushed to the Consulate, where they were married on December 2nd, 1878. Then they tore back to the railway station, bought chocolates and biscuits (the restaurant car was unknown in those days) and had their wedding breakfast on the train.

This was the hurried prelude to a long and happy union!

There was not a town in Italy where the young couple did not dance, and from Italy they went to Russia, and were fulfilling an engagement in Moscow when the

horrible assassination of the Czar Alexander II. made the whole world shudder !

The following year Cecchetti went with his sister to fulfil an engagement at Kieff, and he met with some of the petty tyrannies of officialdom which beset the traveller at that time, and which called upon all the powers of patience that could be mustered. There is a Russian proverb which says : " The cause is decided when the judge has taken a present," and a traveller *at that date* did well to keep it in mind, and put his hand in his pocket whenever a difficulty arose. An amusing story of the effect of such bribery is told in connection with the *corps de ballet* at the Imperial Theatre, Petrograd. A certain official was sent to see if they were all there. He stood in the centre of the stage while they marched round him, and he took special care not to raise his eyes to their faces. Many of the dancers were absent, but the official—having received, it is said, a present—never looked higher than the dancers' legs. He counted them, and considered there were the right number, and reported favourably that nobody was missing.

Cecchetti, being new to the customs of the country, made many mistakes. He found that if he went into a post-office and didn't take off his hat, nobody would serve him. He didn't realize that the little attentions which were here and there bestowed upon him called for a tip. He had not yet learned that in Russia the kernel of the East lay in the shell of the West, and that Oriental influence was stronger than European civilization.

On this particular journey to Kieff he arrived at the station to find that all his boxes, containing his stage clothes and those of his sister, were not to be found. That evening they both had to dance at the theatre, he told the officials ; everyone he could find ; he begged

them to trace the boxes. They shrugged their shoulders, answered politely that they would do their best—and there the matter ended for the day.

At the theatre there was much commotion; hours of consultation and hurry and arrangements for the evening performance. Scratch clothes, scratch scenery, scratch music, scratch—everything!

The next morning Cecchetti went to the station to make inquiries. Nothing had been heard of the boxes. The next, and the next. At last he was told that they had been found at Kiefferoff, further on. After a fortnight he begged that the boxes should be returned to him at Kieff. He waited a month, and then they turned up. In the meantime their absence had caused Cecchetti intense worry, discomfort and expense! So he put in a claim for damages! The officials received his request very agreeably, but whenever Cecchetti went and asked for the sum he had demanded, he was told to "come again in fifteen days."

"If you do not substantiate your claim within three months," he was informed, "it is entirely void."

Every fifteen days Cecchetti made his application, and was greeted with the same formula, "Come again in fifteen days!" until the three months had passed and it was impossible to ask further. After that Cecchetti remembered his father's caution: "Travel *third-class* yourself, if you like, but send your luggage *first!*"

Kieff seemed to bring Cecchetti more trials than anywhere else in Russia, for when he was leaving to return to Italy, he was kept till the last minute waiting for three passports to be officially stamped at police-headquarters. He had sent the concierge a week before to have the necessary authorization, but that personage only brought them at the last moment before Cecchetti's departure. He paid the fifteen roubles

demanded and three more as a tip, then with a clear conscience he got into the train. When the frontier town of Volotchiska was reached, all the passengers had to give up their passports. Cecchetti handed the three for which he had paid fifteen roubles at Kieff to the gendarme, and waited patiently for their return.

He waited a long time; waited to see his fellow-passengers mount the train; waited to see the carriage doors shut; waited to see the train steam off!

"Where are my passports?" he demanded, in the best Russian he knew.

"You cannot have them," said the official. "They are not in order. You should have had them vizé-ed at Kieff."

"But I did have them vizé-ed. I paid fifteen roubles to have it done!"

"I am sorry, but there is no stamp!"

They showed him the passports, and he saw that the Kieff stamp was lacking.

"What am I to do? I have two ladies with me. You cannot expect us to stay here, where there is no hotel, not even a house that is fit for them to stop in!"

"Well," said one man, "you must wait till we hear from Kieff, otherwise there is nothing for you to do but to appeal to the Governor of the province!"

Cecchetti welcomed the idea. "Where can I find the Governor, where and when?"

It transpired that the Governor lived some ten miles away at Pavlotchiska, and he might, or he might not, be there. Cecchetti said he would take the chance! He found a room in the little wooden house near by, which like most village homes, was not suffering from excessive cleanliness, and he put his sister and the other member of the company there, telling them he would be back soon. Then he went and bribed a man to let him have his *tarantass*, and to drive him to the

Governor's house. After the usual bargaining, he jumped into the springless wooden box and sat down on the straw which was spread on the bottom. The *yemschik* leapt up in front, uttered little cries to the horses, and away they went, the bells tinkling, and the driver talking to his team of three, as all Russian drivers do: "Go on, little father, I shall be delighted to give you an extra measure of corn; let me not stick in the mud, and I will not forget thee!" "Keep the pace, little mother, and you shall have a supper that will warm thee for ever!" "Pull, you little barbarian; don't shake your ears at me; attend when I speak to you!" and so on—all the way.

Jolt, jolt, bump, bump, over the rough road, in a springless box on wheels! Cecchetti felt his bones rattling together, and his limbs ache before they had gone half the distance.

Part of the way lay through a thick forest, and in the gloom and darkness Cecchetti began to feel his heart tremble as well as his bones. He began to think that his driver looked a ruffian. What might not this tousle-headed, black-bearded fellow do to him? He could easily murder him, take his money, and throw him into the ditch without anyone being the wiser. On the top of his own terrors and discomfort, Cecchetti began to be tormented with fears as to what might be happening to those he had left behind. Two women, with no protector! Clang, clang, clang! The three ponies gave the rhythm to the tinkling of the bells; the driver drove with a tight rein and talked to the "Little father" and the "Little mother;" the fir-trees shut them in on every side and excluded the light of day!

Cecchetti owns that he was horribly frightened. Presently the driver loosened his reins, and the *tarantass* stopped in front of a small, undistinguished wooden

house—the home of the Governor of the province. It was almost black with the weather; it looked isolated and dreary. Cecchetti got stiffly out of the cart and went to the door, which was wide open. He stepped in gingerly, and asked if the Governor was at home? No one answered; there was no sign of life. He knocked at the door of the first room. "Is the Governor at home? I have come a long way. I am in much difficulty. . . ." etc.

No answer.

He tried another door, repeating the same complaint. Still no reply, and no signs of life.

He mounted the stairs; outside another door he pleaded his cause to the vacant air; again at another. He had just started with: "Is the Governor at home?" when the door flew open, and with a thump and a bump, and a wild, deep bark, out sprang an immense wolfhound! Cecchetti clapped his hat over the nose of the animal, which seemed to him as large as a young pony, and much stronger, and then a voice said: "Who is there?" Behind the dog stood a pleasant-looking young lady, who laughed to see Cecchetti's struggles. "He won't hurt you," she said; "he's like a lamb!"

She called the dog away, and asked Cecchetti what he was doing there, and what he wanted.

"I . . . I want to see the Governor, please!"

"You can't; this is after his office hours!"

"But I must. . . ." Then followed the whole tale of woe.

"Well, I don't know! *Papasha* is downstairs; I will go and see what he says."

Cecchetti followed her closely, and heard his story sympathetically retold.

The father turned in his chair, and inquired gruffly: "Who is Cecchetti?" at which Cecchetti entered,

very suppliant, rather frightened, and looking woe-begone.

The Governor laughed as his daughter had done. But he took compassion; he wrote Cecchetti a pass to carry him over the frontier, and he went jolting back to Volotchiska, trembling at the thought of what might have happened there.

However, his sister and her friend were safe and sound, and nothing happened except the discomfort of being compelled to share one room, where they sat up all night, and when Cecchetti at last tumbled off to sleep in his chair, he roused the house with his shrieks because he dreamt he was being garrotted in the wood!

The morning saw all three safely over the frontier, in Italy.

In 1881, Luigi Manzotti, Italy's noted choreographist, was occupied at La Scala, in Milan, in putting on his great ballet "Excelsior." It was a tremendous turning-point in his life, which had been a curious succession of upward progress. From his boyhood Manzotti had been a close friend of the Cecchetti family. Cecchetti's father had treated him like another son. His rise to fame was one of those romantic stories which seem destined to end in success. Up to the age of eighteen he was busy in the market place at Milan, where his father had a fruit stall. In the evenings, when the day's work was over, he haunted the theatres. He simply worshipped Salvini, and was so struck with his gestures that he got the idea he would like to become an *artiste mime*. He started by getting an engagement as a super in ballet; then he began to ask questions. Would it take a very long time for him to become an *artiste mime?* No! It would take six months. That decided him. He went to a good master and worked hard. At the end of

six months he got an engagement at a theatre in Florence, and being a sincere artist and an excessively good-looking young man, obtained a big success. He was meticulous about his art, far more so than many of those round him, whom he often astonished by his perseverance.

One night he came off the stage and was seen addressing his reflection in the looking-glass. "Pig! Wretched idiot, how dare you call yourself an artist? How dare you imagine that you have a single gift? How . . . ?"

Someone standing by had the temerity to inquire what was the matter.

"What is the matter?" repeated Manzotti in disgust. "I forgot *three gestures* to-night, that is what is the matter."

Not long after his début as *mime*, Manzotti married a noted *ballerina*, Pia Scotti, and, returning to Rome, wrote his first ballet, "Il Moro delle Antille," which was a failure. To compose music for a big ballet had become a serious work of collaboration in the 'eighties. The slipshod method of cutting up bits of music to fit the ballet-master's figures had begun to die out nearly half a century before, and the writer of ballets in Manzotti's day always looked out for a composer who would be in sympathy with his ideas. Manzotti was fortunate in finding Romualdo Marenco, another of those romantic, struggling people whose talent made them rich and famous. All Marenco's youthful ambitions had been hampered by poverty. His mother had been a dresser at a theatre, and he had knocked about in theatre orchestras, picking up what he could of knowledge; very hard-working, excessively ambitious. Somehow he wrote an opera, which he sent to the directors of La Scala, who courteously refused it. Then he sent it to Verdi, who returned it to him,

saying: "If I read every manuscript that was sent to me, I should have no time for my own work." Failing in his ambitious attempt as an operatic composer, he turned his attention to ballet music, and collaborated with Cecchetti's father in his successful "Embarcation of Garibaldi." Then he met Manzotti, and in the years that followed wrote the music for all his ballets.

"Excelsior" made Manzotti's fortune. It went all over Italy, and from there to Paris, where it was performed with as much success as it had achieved elsewhere. In 1885 it was brought to London, and Cecchetti and his wife came with it. The company was under the direction of two Italian impresarios, Signor Corti and Signor Boracchi. They had had no experience of English methods of management, and started their season on Italian lines. With scarcely any advertising or *réclame* in the daily papers, they took His Majesty's Theatre, which had been closed for a long time, and had the stigma of failure hanging over it. This was an obstacle in itself, but added to it there was the decline of public taste for the ballet to contend with. Dancing of the ballet type was just then alluded to in a manner that was not at all promising for "Excelsior," and the phrase, "We are weary of the caperings of foreign artists," was not a felicitous introduction. Worse still, and utterly confusing, was the paragraph which appeared in the morning papers, stating that the lease of His Majesty's was for sale, and inviting bids. It needed a vast amount of publicity to counteract all these opposing forces, and unfortunately the management had no notion of what was necessary. The theatre, suffering from chill neglect and the star of ill-fortune, was thrown open without any renovation, with no stir or advertising. The ballet, inefficiently rehearsed, was

performed in a manner that was almost fatal. Yet its novelty was at once recognized by the critics, one of whom said that "It was a lesson for Augustus Harris, who would do well to note that there was no need to drag audiences through moribund tales and legends. A ballet could be up-to-date and still a ballet."

As a matter of fact, nothing so spectacular or so attractive and novel as "Excelsior" had been seen in London up to that date. The subject was the struggle between Good and Evil, between Progress and Retrogression. But instead of being worked out on the old-fashioned lines, which were a mixture of fairy tale and Christmas pantomime, the scenes were topical, the action up-to-date. The public was shown the great inventions of science which had influenced the progress of the world. The first steamer passing under a bridge over which railway trains were moving; Volta trying to invent electricity and hampered by the Spirit of Darkness. Then, in a flash, Progress showed that he had succeeded, and the scene changed to the big post office at Washington, where the telegraph operators were at work, receiving and sending messages to and from every part of the world. Then there was the opening of the Suez Canal, which was spoken of as a magnificent spectacle, and the exciting completion of the Mont Cenis tunnel, with the French working on one side and the Italians on the other. The tense moment was reached when the Italians were waiting to hear the French hammering through the last portion of rock. At first they made a mistake, and worked in the wrong direction—a true incident—and then they discovered their error, and ground their way through to the waiting Italians.

Signor Coppi was *maître de ballet*, and Giovanni Zaccarelli painted the scenery. The cost of production came to about five thousand pounds, which was a good

deal for those days, but which seems nothing when compared with the twenty-five thousand pounds which was expended on the recent production of "The Sleeping Beauty" at the Alhambra in 1921.

The Press was distinctly pleased. The *Times* said that "dancing was out of fashion and unwelcome, but 'Excelsior' was out of the ordinary type." Cecchetti's dancing was praised by all the critics. Still, it was no use! In spite of the efforts of good dancers, of vivid and stirring spectacular effects, and of pretty music, "Excelsior" fared badly. Financial collapse was imminent. A month after it began an effort was made to add to its attraction by starting with a *ballet divertissement* called "A Villa for Sale." This amusing little prelude was written by Cecchetti. It parodied the trials of the July house-hunter, longing to leave town and migrate to a nice little villa in the country. Two families set their hearts on one villa, and the winner was subjected to the annoyances which the unsuccessful family worked up. The Salvation Army, with General Booth's Hallelujah Band—a new and prominent part of life in the streets of London just then—was included in the noises and mystèries which made the villa a hell upon earth. Cecchetti's wife made the Salvation Army flags, and the piece caused much amusement.

Nevertheless, the famous theatre, which in the days of Mapleson had been the centre of Italian opera and ballet, was not drawing. The stage, where Maria Taglioni had inspired the technique of dancing with new poetry, was full of people; the auditorium was not. Yet there was plenty of praise and enthusiasm about the ballet, and Cecchetti was singled out for applause, especially in his own *pas de deux*, which he danced with Madame Giovannina Limido. At first they danced with the accustomed pauses for applause.

They started with the usual introduction, *en demi caractère*, which was one of Cecchetti's innovations; then came the variation for the man, which always brought him a terrific round of applause. It was depressing, and even difficult, for Madame Limido to follow. She waited in the wings while cries of "Encore" rang through the house. She was a good dancer, but Nature had not been kind to her in the matter of looks. So for several nights the *pas de deux* brought Cecchetti all the success and put Madame Limido in the shade.

Cecchetti resented such a one-sided performance. It was inartistic, and he saw a way in which it could be remedied.

"Madame Limido," he said, "we could make our *pas de deux* a great success if we danced it through and paid no attention to the applause. Directly I have finished my variation, you must come on with yours. We will go through it without stopping."

She was very much opposed to the idea at first, but Cecchetti won her over, and from that moment their *pas de deux* raised a furore for both of them. The effect was magical; the audience, instead of singling out Cecchetti, went wild over both the dancers, and they had to repeat the whole *pas de deux*. On the first night the change was made Henry Irving was in the house, and in his most prodigal and kindly way, he went on the stage after the performance and shook the two dancers by the hand.

"You have given me intense pleasure to-night," he told them. "Would you mind accepting a little memento of my gratitude?" and he handed them each a cheque for ten pounds.

Cecchetti thinks the compliment paid him by the "English Salvini" one of the most gracious he has ever received.

"Excelsior," pulled back by bad management, continued its course for several months, after which it was taken over by Charles Hawtrey, who was coining money by drawing all London to see "The Private Secretary" at the Globe Theatre.

He, of course, saw what was wrong, and started his management by closing His Majesty's for eight days. A host of painters and cleaners and carpenters had the theatre to themselves, and it reopened with a flourish of trumpets, redecorated; its staircases banked with flowers.

Cecchetti remained the bright and particular star as *premier danseur*, but a *pas seul* was introduced for Miss Kate Vaughan, and a great deal of publicity was given to her salary, which was announced as seventy pounds a week. It was a big amount at that time, and considering she only danced twenty minutes, it made as much stir as the three figures to which the salaries of stars have risen in these days. The newspapers worked out that Miss Vaughan was receiving about a pound a minute! After that there was more life round the box office, and "Excelsior" at last won the recognition it gained in Italy.

Several accidents happened behind the scenes during the run of "Excelsior." One of the most miraculous escapes was that of a stage carpenter, who had climbed on to a high batten to disentangle a rope. His foot slipped, and he fell on to a couch which was one of the "props" for Act II. It softened his fall, but it did not prevent his breaking his arm and two ribs.

One morning when Cecchetti was rehearsing some of the scenes, one of the ballet dancers got too close to his stick. He kicked it by mistake, and it rebounded, striking Cecchetti such a blow on the cheek that he looked as though he had been fighting. When he arrived home his face was every colour of the rainbow.

"What have you been doing?" Madame Cecchetti asked, in consternation.

"Oh, boxing," said Cecchetti, who was feeling just then as though he would have liked to have a "round" with the dancer who had been so clumsy.

A ballet-dancer's kick is no small affair. It is something to be reckoned with. There is a story that Fanny Elssler was once crossing the ocean, and when she was lying in her berth one night she saw a man stealing towards her. She always kept her jewels under her pillow, and she immediately made up her mind that he was a thief. She waited till he came near to her, then she kicked him in the chest, and he fell down dead on the spot.

Something of the same sort happened to Cecchetti whilst he was in London. He possessed a much-treasured medallion, beautifully set with diamonds, which had been presented to him by some of his admirers in Italy. He was very proud of it, and often wore it on a chain round his neck. His friends told him repeatedly that he ought not to do it. "Someone will try and steal it, if you will persist in displaying it like that." But Cecchetti refused to pay any attention. One day, as he was walking along a quiet street, a young man passed him and caught sight of the medallion. He went on a little way, then turned, passed Cecchetti, turned again, came closer to him, turned back, and finally lurched heavily against Cecchetti, who put up his elbow to protect his medallion. At the same time he gave the man a ballet-dancer's kick! He went down with a crash, and it was a long time before he could get his breath, and when he did Cecchetti was far away, continuing his slow pace and his contemplations.

London, without any knowledge of English, was a difficult place to get about in in those days, and

Cecchetti got into several amusing muddles. He and his wife used to climb on to the tops of 'buses and take a ticket to the end of the route. Once, when the never-ending rain made a torrential descent, they bundled hastily into a hansom. Cecchetti gave the address, and thought he was understood. But the cabby went on driving and driving, though they were close to their home. He waggled the trap-door above him. The face from above peered through.

"All right, don't you worry. I'm goin' there as fast as I can."

He shut down the trap-door, flicked his horse, and drove steadily on, muttering to himself: "These 'ere foreigners, they're so excitable, keep on dancin' about inside my kib as though it was 'Ampstead 'Eath on a bink 'oliday!"

He was wrong. The inmates of his cab were perfectly quiet physically, but mentally they were much agitated. Cecchetti put up his umbrella as a signal to stop, and again endeavoured to explain. From the other side of the road came the inevitable bobby, strolling along, casting a roaming eye on the hansom. The cabby, unable to understand a word, beckoned to the policeman, and to him Cecchetti handed a piece of paper he had just found in his pocket on which his address was plainly written.

"Look 'ere," said the policeman, "'e wants Chelsea, not Chiswick!"

The house was reached at last!

Apparently the police in the 'eighties were much more assertive than they are now. There was none of that youth and jocularity which characterizes them to-day. One of the old panaceas for all ills seemed to be the request to "Move on!" From a lame donkey to a state procession, the one thing needful was to "Move on!" After the performances at His Majesty's, the

Photo by] [*Hana, Ltd.*

LADY VERE (Karissima) — GERTRUDE STERROLL (Madame Karsavina)
in "The Truth about the Russian Ballet."

[*To face p.* 117.

Italian dancers used to make a practice of seeing each other home, in little knots of a dozen or so. As a rule they stood at one another's doors and talked gaily. Up would come the heavy-footed bobby, and, not knowing what terrible plot might be in process of hatching amongst people who talked a foreign language, he employed the usual formula: "Move on, please!"

And they moved.

Cecchetti, like many others, looks back with regret at the London of those days. It was a cheap place to live in. The things in the shops were much less expensive than in Italy. Quite ordinary men wore top hats, and women of small means wore the fashionable bustle and high thimble toque. One could drowse along in a "growler" or go at a brisk pace in a "hansom" at a charge of sixpence a mile! At the theatres "No Fees" was posted up on the walls; there was no charge for the programme and nothing to pay for leaving your hat in the cloak-room. There were no bewildering taxis or motor horns to make one jump. The old Metropolitan Railway trains puffed their way through the suffocating air of Gower Street, and twopence took one a long way. Evening papers cost a halfpenny, and dailies a penny! It was possible to live on a modest income, and have something over!

In addition, London, from the stage-folk point of view, was a very pleasant place indeed, because the old insular ideas about actresses and actors were rapidly falling to pieces. Dukes and duchesses entertained the stars of the theatrical world at supper, and, according to a humorous account of a writer of that date, an actress often found herself seated between a "Premier and a Prelate at the dinner table."

Actresses married peers of the realm, and people began to understand that it was possible to adopt the stage as a profession, and yet be an epitome of all the

domestic virtues. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft were at the apex of their popularity. The latter were giving dances at their house in Berkeley Square, while Mr. and Mrs. Kendal entertained in Harley Street. Wilson Barrett was famous for his Sunday suppers and banquets, and the most prodigal and magnificent of all theatrical hosts was Mr. Henry Irving, who had not yet been knighted. Brookfield, Conway, Hawtrey, Toole, Hare, the beautiful Miss Fortescue, Ellen Terry, were social "lions" that hostesses vied with one another to entertain. The age of silly prejudice had gone for ever.

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE Cecchetti was in London, the management of La Scala was busy arranging for the production of another ballet by Manzotti. This was "Amor," a choreographic conception which was even on more elaborate lines than "Excelsior." "Amor" had its origin in a much older ballet, "Il Misolungi," in which Cecchetti's father and mother and sister had danced thirty years previously. Manzotti, looking over the dusty old files and scraps of manuscript which were carefully preserved in the archives of the Scala Theatre, came upon a copy of the old ballet. The idea appealed to him, and out of it came "Amor." The leading rôle of the Satyr was one which he considered only Cecchetti could dance, so he was promptly engaged, and went to La Scala to rehearse, after finishing his first visit to London.

There, on the great stage, tremendous preparations were in progress. Zacarelli was painting blue skies and marble halls on immense stretches of canvas. Women were busy matching colours and stitching elaborate costumes. Carpenters were hammering, crowds of supers standing about awaiting their cues. On the stage Manzotti rehearsed the *corps de ballet*. In his hand he held a huge truncheon, with which he beat time on the boards. The rhythm came thundering out like the blows of a sledge hammer. It was a formidable weapon for a ballet master to handle, but the taps of an ordinary stick would have been utterly lost in the cavernous depths of La Scala stage.

There were many other large theatres in Italy where the truncheon was used, but ordinarily a bamboo cane gave the rhythmic beats, and ballet masters counted many presents of beautiful sticks amongst their possessions. Cecchetti has a number, which have come to him from various pupils. Nijinsky gave him a beautiful cane with an exquisitely embossed gold top, on which Cecchetti's name is inscribed. Sticks from India, from Japan, of great beauty and interest, have been presented to him. His pupil Edina Santori, who danced for a long time at the Empire, gave him one in memory of a walk which they took together in the country. She was very anxious to find a four-leaf clover, being convinced that it would bring her luck. Cecchetti saw two growing near him, but he didn't tell her. He suggested that she might try in a new direction. To her delight she discovered them, and being very pleased, she sent Cecchetti a magnificent ebony stick, with a heavy gold top, surmounted with a four-leaf clover, also in gold. Whilst he was in Russia, every pupil of Cecchetti's inscribed his or her name on this stick, which, alas ! is one of the many treasures lost to him in Petrograd.

" Amor," with its chariots and horses, its elephants, its Roman legions, its gorgeous dresses and scenery, brought the Milanese public crowding to see it. Manzotti had gained name and fame for immense conceptions ; this was on a larger scale than anything that had been seen before. Six " Excelsior " ballets could have been put into it. When it was taken to Rome, part of the street outside the theatre had to be shut off so as to have room to organize the big processions before entering on the stage. No theatre, except the Scala, was really large enough for " Amor," and consequently from a monetary point of view it did not represent as much to Manzotti as " Excelsior," which was always

being put on in some part of the world by either Coppi, or Coppini, or Cecchetti himself. However, an abridged version of "Amor" did come to London. When the Kiralfy brothers built Olympia for "Venice in London," Coppini came and assisted them, and in the second edition of that popular reproduction of Venetian life he put on some of the scenes from "Amor" as a "side show."

Both Cecchetti and his wife made a hit in "Amor," which was followed by the first performance of Verdi's "Otello." This was another sensation of the season. Tamagno, with a voice like a cannon, made the chandeliers vibrate. The house was packed with a seething mass of enthusiastic, excited people. For the first time in the history of the Italian stage, the telephone had been set up behind the scenes so that the King could hear the performance in Rome. Verdi, handsome, courtly, elegant, sat at a table receiving shoals of presents and telegrams. Enthusiasm ran high; there was the liberating atmosphere of triumph which indicates a lasting success.

Cecchetti waited to see the historic event, for Verdi was the king of the hour where opera was concerned, and each new production was looked forward to with excitement. Then he went to Fermo to produce "Excelsior." His wife played the principal rôle and had quite an ovation.

In the company Cecchetti placed one of his best pupils. This was Luigi Albertieri, now settled in America as a teacher, but then at the commencement of his career. Cecchetti was very pleased and proud of the young man, and treated him like a son, and he was very anxious to see him succeed; he also wanted to prove his powers, but he didn't like to make Albertieri nervous by stating a fixed date when he should make his début.

So he made a little plan. He coached Albertieri in his own part of the slave, and one night he pretended to be ill. He went to the theatre as usual, and just before the performance took Albertieri aside.

"I cannot dance to-night; I do not feel well! You must take my place!"

Albertieri opened his eyes in consternation. "What? Take *your* place, Maestro?"

"Yes! Come, you must be quick!"

"But . . . I . . . !"

"We are both the same size; you can wear my clothes, such as they are."

Albertieri hastened to his dressing room and smeared on the dark grease paint, which made him look black and quite unrecognizable. Then he went on the stage, and throughout the evening danced with so much fervour and vigour that people, not knowing a change had been made in the cast, whispered: "Cecchetti is dancing well to-night! He is fuller of life than ever. Bravo, bravo!"

Cecchetti stood in the wings and watched him till the final curtain, when a terrific round of applause ensued. Albertieri bowed slightly, then he rushed to the wings, seized Cecchetti and dragged him out. He took him by the hands, and embraced him fervently on each cheek repeatedly, and as he did so the paint from his face came off on Cecchetti's face. There they stood, while the audience yelled with delight, and Cecchetti gradually turned from white to black! When the curtain finally went down the laughter behind the scenes was as hearty as it had been in the front of the house.

From Fermo, Cecchetti went to Rome, where he was engaged to dance again in "Amor," which was with much difficulty fitted into the smaller theatre proportions. Then he went back to La Scala to play

in a series of Manzotti's ballets, including "Rolla," "Narenta" and "Sieba."

In the summer of 1887, Cecchetti and his brother took a troupe of Italian ballet dancers to Petrograd, where they played at the beautiful Arcadia, a noted centre of amusement during the months that the theatres were closed. Madame Limido, who was Cecchetti's partner in the "Excelsior" ballet in London, went as *prima ballerina*, and Madame Cecchetti as the leading *mime*. For the first ballet, Cecchetti put on his own "Le Pouvoir de l'Amour," and a potpourri of "Excelsior." The latter fired M. Poliokoff and M. Alexandre, the managers of the Arcadia, with the ambition to put on the whole ballet. But as the stage was far too small, another of Manzotti's ballets was chosen. This was "Sieba," a Scandinavian legend, dealing with the mythical King of Thule. This ballet was not quite as elaborate as "Excelsior," nevertheless it was a tight fit, especially in the last act, when two hundred people passed in procession. Madame Cecchetti took the part of the King of Thule, Madame Limido was the *première danseuse*, and Cecchetti danced in the first act only. The opening night was a scene of excitement such as the Arcadia had rarely witnessed. All the dancers from the Imperial Theatre had thronged there when the Italians first arrived to see their performance, and the prospect of seeing one of Manzotti's famous ballets brought them crowding to the spot. In the audience there were M. Petipa, General Sevolovski, the Director of the Marynski Theatre, and pretty nearly everybody who was directly interested in the art of the ballet, or just took an idle pleasure in seeing it.

Behind the scenes the crush and excitement was terrific. Everyone was at work, from the Director himself to the most unimportant super. People were

stuffing themselves into clothes, men in evening dress were tugging about scenery, Cecchetti and his brother leapt about from place to place giving orders, artists from the Marynski came and offered to help. Enthusiasm ran high, and nobody thought any occupation too mean so long as they were in the rush.

All went well until the last act. Cecchetti had changed his clothes, and he went into the orchestra to gain an impression of the performance. His brother was dancing, then the processions began to pass, and for a moment Cecchetti held his breath, for one company had come in too soon and was blocking the way of the rest. Cecchetti rushed round to the stage door, took off the coat he was wearing and turned it inside out, for he realized that he had no time to get into his tights. Fortunately it was lined with red and would pass in the crowd. He got quickly on to the stage, pulled the erring company out of the way, took them round to their right entrance, and saved a perilous moment which threatened to ruin the whole of the last act. One of those demonstrations of pleasure of which perhaps Russian audiences alone are capable greeted the performance, and for the rest of the time in Petrograd the Italian dancers were fêted and entertained till they were tired out. M. Poliokoff, the manager, gave them sumptuous suppers, and got gipsy dancers and gipsy singers and Bohemians and Caucasians to amuse his guests with the songs and dances of their race and country. Hearing Madame Cecchetti express the wish to see the Volga, he insisted on the whole troupe coming down to his country house. He chartered a special steamer, and they all boarded it after a certain performance was concluded at Arcadia. It was then very late, but M. Poliokoff seemed to have an unending store of energy. For every moment of the journey he had arranged some

diversion, and, by the time they arrived at his house, on the banks of the Volga, most of them were satiated with too much entertaining. The *prima ballerina*, the *mime*, the *danseuse*, all went to lie down and get some sleep when they arrived at M. Poliokoff's house, but they had not reckoned on the chance of more amusement. There was a band! *A military band!* It was ready to give them the fullest welcome on a hot August morning! A little breeze stirred the aspen leaves on the trees, the distant corn-fields were ripe and yellow, the Volga flowed nobly through the valley—and the band played! Up in their rooms the *ballerinas* and the *coryphées* yawned with sleepiness.

Downstairs the men dancers thought of availing themselves of the boats which were placed for their disposal, while the band, having partaken freely of refreshment, also thought that a turn on the river would be agreeable. They promptly took possession of every boat they could find, while the guests stood on the shore and called to them.

Replies which sounded like invocations to his Satanic Majesty to carry every Italian that was ever born away to a still warmer place floated back to the shore.

"Come back!" Cecchetti shouted.

Laughter and rudeness greeted his command.

"Come back!" he repeated.

Finally the subservience characteristic of the Russian peasant came uppermost, and the men returned to shore, but they were in a very bad temper indeed. Pleasant libations, followed by exercise in the burning sun, roused them to a state of bellicose argument, and a terrific attack and repulse ensued. Cecchetti, his brother, and Albertieri, who snatched a sword and brandished it, standing on the side of a hill had the advantage, and, like Horatio and his brethren, they

hurled the enemy backwards. The bandsmen rolled down the incline like automatons. Of course the noise of the disturbance reached the inmates of the house, and M. Poliokoff himself had to come out and restore order.

That afternoon the artists who had been delighting Petrograd audiences returned, wearied out, feeling that there was such a thing in life as being over-entertained.

The farewell performance of the Italian troupe at the Arcadia was the culminating point of a season of excitement and enthusiasm. The sculptor Praga made plaster busts of Madame Limido and Cecchetti. These were placed on either side of the stage, and the artists from the opera crowned them with laurel wreaths. During the productions dancers from the Marynski Theatre had been rehearsed by Cecchetti, and they presented him with an address, thanking him for showing them how to work; at the same time they gave him a beautiful cut-glass set of liqueur glasses and decanter in a case, and numerous other tokens of admiration.

There were speeches, and bowings, and "Bravos!" and "Bravas!" and everyone was elated and pleased.

That ended the season at the Arcadia, but it marked the beginning of Cecchetti's career at the Imperial Theatre. The Director of the Marynski had recognized that Russia could boast of no such artist as Cecchetti.

The Russians have always been dancing people, but the best technique—that mixture of France and Italy—was needed to bring out the gifts which lay dormant. Already the Imperial control had recognized this fact, and it had been steadily maintaining a somewhat inferior ballet in Petrograd and Moscow, while

ballet had risen to perfection and fallen into a decline in Europe.

Of course Cecchetti was a desirable star, and he was immediately approached about an engagement by the Imperial management. He was fascinated by the country, charmed with the audiences, and accepted.

Ballet was the delight of the aristocracy, from the Emperor downwards. Not many strangers could get access to the Marynski Theatre (Little Marie Theatre). The general public had little chance either: first, because of the high prices of admission; secondly, because of the long list of subscribers, which practically filled the theatre. Every year these *abonnés* renewed their tickets, and often boxes and stalls were handed down from father to son. Sometimes, when a subscriber died, he willed his ticket to his heir, so that the Marynski, in addition to being a theatre, was a social centre where people were sure to meet their friends.

Not only was the Marynski supported by an Imperial grant, but so also was the Imperial School of Ballet, which fed the *corps de ballet*, and gave early tuition to such celebrities as Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, and a whole line of dancers, who learnt the technique which had been imported from France and Italy, and who in latter years have taken Western Europe by storm.

The school was founded by the Empress Anne, who shared the taste of her illustrious predecessor, Peter the Great, for Western amusements. Its modern period, however, dates from 1802, when Didelot was brought from France and appointed director.

When Cecchetti first took up his duties there in 1887, free tuition was given to 48 girls and 48 boys, who lived in a house set aside for them. Three of each of these 48 were provided for by a legacy which Didelot

had left for the purpose. There were also a certain number of *externes*—pupils who lived away from the school, but were given special permission to avail themselves of the teaching provided. They paid about thirty pounds a year. Every child had to pass an examination before being admitted, and often at the beginning of the term the professors would have to select from some two to three hundred applicants when there were only about six vacancies.

The minimum age of entrance was fixed at nine, the maximum at eleven. In Italy, where children develop more quickly than in northern countries, Cecchetti says that the age of beginning can be made a year earlier, making the minimum eight and the maximum ten; but he considers that any child, no matter how well developed, should not start before eight.

Once a pupil was accepted, there was no going back from the contract unless it was a case of some serious physical drawback. But, as they were so carefully chosen, both from the point of view of strength and ability, they developed on healthy lines. A contract bound them to nine years' tuition at the Imperial School, and at the conclusion they had to dance at the Opera House in Moscow, or at the Marynski in Petrograd, for a moderate salary. As a career it did not offer luxury, but a pupil was sure of a future and a living, either as a dancer or a teacher. There was also a good opportunity of adding to the income derived from the Imperial Treasury by obtaining engagements during the summer months, when the Imperial theatres were closed.

In addition to the training as a ballet dancer, pupils were given a general education. It didn't go very far, but it did more than cover the three R's, for there were opportunities of learning drawing, and music, and the piano, and elocution, and acting.

During the first year pupils were only allowed to visit their parents on Sundays; after that they were carefully looked after. They were chaperoned wherever they went, and watched over by nurses, and doctors, and chiropodists.

M. Gert was the principal teacher at the school when Cecchetti was appointed. He mostly taught the men. He was himself a graceful dancer, of not any great attainments, but he was extremely popular, and an immense favourite with the public. In a *pas de deux* he was perfection; but he had a habit of shirking his *pas seul*, and sending on a couple of his pupils to dance in his place, an idiosyncrasy to which the public became accustomed and applauded all the same.

The real patrons of the school were the Emperor and Empress. They were the "Little Father" and the "Little Mother," whom the pupils looked upon as their special protectors. Every year the Emperor and Empress came and dined at the school. The evening was, of course, a tremendous occasion, yet it was quite informal and simple. The Emperor sat at the head of the boys' table, the Empress at the head of the girls' table. The children talked freely to them, calling them "Papasha," and "Mamasha" (Little Papa and Little Mama), and the honoured guests chatted with them with parental kindliness. When the meal was ended, and the moment came for the Royalties to depart, all the pupils clustered round them to the carriage. The visit usually concluded with the Emperor making the popular announcement that the pupils were to have "three days' special holiday."

At the time of Cecchetti's début at the Marynski, there was a rival opera house which backed on to it. This was the Great Theatre; a handsome edifice, the interior of which was beautifully decorated and fitted. In every way it was superior to the Marynski, which

was not as large, nor as elegant inside; neither had it the acoustic properties of its more important neighbour. The Great Theatre was under the management of an impresario who was something of a thorn in the side of the directors of the Marynski, because of the immense attractions which he organized for his patrons. His seasons of Italian opera brought Patti and Nicolini, Sembrich, Scalchi, Melba, and pretty nearly every great operatic singer of the day. They formed a strong counter-attraction at a time when the large public had a *flair* for foreign art, and were inclined to depreciate native talent.

People who have not been in Russia cannot imagine the demonstrations of enthusiasm of which an audience is capable. When Patti was singing in opera at Petrograd, the last fall of the curtain was never accepted as final. Over and over again it had to be drawn up until she sang an encore, usually Alabieff's "Nightingale," in Russian. Flowers, deafening applause, and often people climbing on to the stage, where they shook hands with their adored singer. Frequently the demonstration did not end here. Outside the crowd gathered, and when Patti got into her carriage, pressed forward, took the horses out of the shafts and dragged the vehicle to her hotel. When Christine Nilsson was singing in Petrograd at the same time as Patti, there were rival factions of the admiring public. Nilsson as Marguerite was exquisitely beautiful and appealing, and as she was also the subject of enthusiastic demonstrations, so she also had to adopt a Russian song for an encore. Her choice was that plaintive folk-song, "You are my darling, you are my love," which she sang with tender expression and lowered eyes that absolutely entranced those who listened.

As the theatre was Government property, and the Emperor saw the need of a Conservatoire of Music, the

Great Theatre was taken for this purpose, and the seasons of Italian opera were transferred to the Aquarium.

At the Marynski Theatre audiences were given Russian opera and ballet. All the Imperial artists were well paid. They were engaged by the year, and whether they played or not, also during their holidays, they received their salary every month. Opera was performed every night in the week except Sunday, which was set aside for the ballet. There was great rivalry between the directors of the two attractions, and also between the singers and dancers. The operatic artists schemed to get rid of the ballet. Little moves were made, little obstacles set up. Once the Emperor Nicholas II. was approached about putting down the ballet altogether. But he did not seem at all inclined. Then came the idea of erecting a new theatre, with the excuse that the Marynski was old-fashioned and bad for sound. The Emperor was again appealed to, and he said that if an idea of the cost would be given he would consider the scheme. Without due consideration he was told that it would cost about six million roubles, but when the appeal was set down on paper the figure came to double the sum.

The Emperor read it through. "I cannot see that your proposition will save money."

Then it was suggested that expenses would be cut down if the ballet was given up.

"What," said the Emperor, "are you proposing to put a number of people out of work? No! The ballet happens to be the one thing I enjoy."

He ran his pencil through the project and returned it.

There were many who shared the Emperor's opinion, and this was evidenced by the fact that the opera was *not* always crowded, the ballet *was*.

Cecchetti made his first appearance at the Marynski Theatre in "The Tulip of Haarlem," a pretty ballet by Leon Ivanoff, one of the professors at the Imperial School of Ballet. It is amongst the many ballets that have never been seen in England. He danced a much-admired *pas de deux* with Madame Nikitine, who was the star of the hour at the Imperial Theatre just then, and this was followed by "L'Ordre du Roi," adapted from Victor Hugo's "Le Roi l'a dit," in which he partnered the brilliant Virginia Zucchi. During rehearsals there was a good deal of discussion about La Zucchi's dress in this ballet. She was supposed to wear a costume of the Marie Stuart type, with a high Medici collar. At each spiked point a pearl had been hung. There was no doubt that the idea was excellent and effective, but La Zucchi was against it, because Cecchetti, as a fisherman, carried a net, and she saw the possibilities of getting entangled in a way that would make their dancing excessively awkward. But the policy of the Imperial Theatre was fairly autocratic, and even a *prima ballerina* had to abide by the decision of the *maître de ballet*. So the pearls were sewn on with great care and firmness, and the evening came. La Zucchi and Cecchetti started their *pas de deux*, he revolved round her gracefully with his net, both of them striving to avoid the entanglement which they feared. All of a sudden Cecchetti felt a tug, and there was La Zucchi fastened like a fish, and trying to get free. They continued to dance, while La Zucchi kept on whispering, "Pull, Cecchetti! Pull hard!" He did, with the result that the collar and the pearls fell to the ground, the pearls rolling in every direction.

"I knew it would happen," said La Zucchi, after they had taken their numerous calls. "I knew it, but M. Petipa would not listen to me!"

Now, M. Marius Petipa was a very important person

at the Marynski Theatre. He was the *maître de ballet*, a Frenchman by birth, and an artist of long experience. When Cecchetti made his début there, Petipa had been in Petrograd nearly thirty years; he was then over sixty, Cecchetti was thirty-seven. A long line of successes as a dancer and producer of ballets lay behind him. He could look back to his début with Carlotta Grisi at the Comédie Française in Paris, in a benefit performance for Rachel, and he danced with her at her farewell performance in 1843, in "The Peri." His reign in Petrograd had begun before Cecchetti was born, and there had been nobody to dispute his word or his ideas during that time. The arrival of a young dancer of Cecchetti's youth and gifts was naturally quite an event, and it had its disturbing effect on Petipa's supremacy, especially when the former was also appointed, a year later, *second maître de ballet*. Then it was a case of the new meeting the old and well-established. They were both passionately devoted to their art, but there was one branch of it in which Cecchetti excelled everyone at Petrograd; that was as a *mime*. Both he and Madame Cecchetti could put everyone in the shade as mimic artists; they could even teach M. Petipa. It was here that they showed the supremacy of Italian tradition, for the artist *mime* in France had always been inferior to those of Italy. The French dancers had been foremost in fixing the rules of dancing, but the *mime* was born and bred in Italy, and the union of dancing and *mime* had come about in the following way. In the old days there were two kinds of dancing, called the "Dance Noble," and the "Dance Grotesque." As a rule two ballets were given in an evening, one for graceful, elegant dancing, for which French dancers were more than often engaged, and the "Dance Grotesque," which was more or less humorous and quaint. It was in the

latter that the Italians excelled. The union of the two started the vogue of those numberless *ballets d'action*, of which Petipa wrote quite sixty, and which were at their height in the 'eighties. It was in his combination of dancer and *mime* that Cecchetti became the best artist of his day.

Both Petipa and Cecchetti had strongly defined ideas of technique and of production, but the older artist had many years' start of the younger at Petrograd, and he was perhaps not quite as open to new ideas as he might have been. As *maître de ballet* he had upheld the traditions of dancing there with dignity and firmness, and he had become accustomed to his word being law, and this did not make the way easy for the new artists, who came from Italy primed with new standards and ideas of reform. No one felt this more than La Zucchi, who was the first Italian dancer to visit Petrograd. She first started by reforming the ballet skirts, which were worn far too long to suit her taste, and she was always having good-natured passages at arms with Petipa. Both were gifted with quick repartee and satire.

Petipa was meticulous about the correctness of the costumes worn in the ballets. Everything had to be according to the period, and he had somewhat old-fashioned ideas about the dignity of the types represented. A King should always wear a crown, and a Queen must always look royal and unruffled, no matter in what situation she might be placed.

One night, after the first performance of a little ballet called "La Fille de Farone," a most amusing battle of words took place between La Zucchi and Petipa. La Zucchi played the part of a Queen in the production, and in one scene she and her ladies-in-waiting were amusing themselves by hunting in the forest. The Queen was in royal robes, with her crown

on her head, and there was an exciting moment when she got separated from her suite. She gazed round rather frightened at finding herself alone, and shrank in terror when she saw a tiger come down the mountain in pursuit of her. Of course she looked round for some sort of protection, and seeing none, jumped into the water, where she screamed loudly for help. The neglectful members of her party heard her, and came to her rescue.

La Zucchi's conception led her to get as near to nature as possible. Before she was rescued she tore off her crown, pulled down her hair, disarranged her clothes, and was dragged out in a half-fainting state. This greatly distressed M. Petipa, who rushed round to her, protesting.

"How could you, a Queen, think of appearing before the audience in such an untidy state?"

"Untidy, why not?"

"Where was your crown?"

"In the water, of course; where else would it be?"

"But you are a Queen; you ought not to be without it!"

La Zucchi's eyes twinkled!

"My crown I lost in the water, and I can tell you this, M. Petipa, had *you* been pursued by a tiger, you would have lost not only your crown, but your trousers too!"

That ended the discussion!

No man in Petrograd had a larger store of anecdotes than Petipa, and when he was in the humour—this generally happened on the nights there were special rehearsals for the leading dancers—he told them with a zest that was irresistible. He used to enjoy recounting his engagement at the Imperial Theatre. It occurred in the summer, when the theatre was closed,

but he was rather ignorant of the seasons then, and when he went up to the Director's office he expected to sign his contract and receive orders. He signed the contract, then the Director turned to him and said: "Well, that's settled; now you can go!"

Petipa was a young man at the time, and he felt considerably shaken by the order to depart. He wondered if there was some mistake, and he wasn't really engaged, after all.

"But, Excellency, is there nothing for me to do?"

"Nothing till August. *Allez-vous promener!*" And he went. But first he visited the Operatic Treasury, where he was generously given an advance on his salary. Ah! The artists at the Imperial Theatre were treated in a lavish way, he thought; and he never changed his opinion.

CHAPTER IX

PETIPA'S anecdotes of the Russian Royal Family were excessively entertaining, and they had the freshness of being obtained on the spot, and not out of books, for Petipa had lived in Petrograd during the reign of four Emperors : Nicholas I., Alexander II., Alexander III. and Nicholas II. Cecchetti recalls the felicitous way he used to recount how Nicholas I. treated a certain gentleman at his court whose losses at cards kept him in a constant state of impecuniosity and debt.

Once the collapse in the fortunes of the gambler was so serious that he retired to his bed, feeling very ill indeed. Nicholas soon noticed his absence from the Palace. He made inquiries.

" Where is —— ? "

" Oh, your Majesty, he is ill ! "

" What is the matter with him ? "

" Oh, your Majesty, it is the kind of illness that often comes to those who play for high stakes at cards, and lose more than they can afford ! "

" Umph ! "

The Emperor went to a book-case, took out a volume, turned over the pages, and between each leaf he placed a " Katarina " (a hundred roubles).

" Take that to ——, with my compliments, and tell him I hope he will find it entertaining ! "

The book was at once delivered, and it had such a reviving influence that the recipient presented himself

at court the next day, ready for more indulgence in his weakness for cards. The Emperor at once singled him out.

"Well, ——, how are you? Recovered from your illness?"

"Yes, your Majesty, I am almost well!"

"Did you read my book I sent you?"

"Indeed I did, your Majesty! I enjoyed it so much that I am waiting for a *second edition!*"

The Emperor again went to his book-case, took out another volume, interlarded the pages with more "Katarinas," and wrote on the top: "The Second Edition, *and the last!*"

Cecchetti's memories of Petrograd extended as far back as his first visit in 1874, when Alexander II. was Czar of Russia, and he, too, recalls many good stories of Nicholas I., who was manly and soldierly, and had a strong sense of responsibility. One was amongst the *bons mots* in Petrograd, and recalled how Nicholas, driving along a certain street one day, saw a soldier lurching along, evidently the worse for drink. Now the effect of vodka on the peasant is generally one of happiness. He smiles and beams with good temper. The Emperor stopped his carriage and called the soldier to him.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

The man steadied himself as much as possible, saluted, and with extraordinary simplicity, replied:

"Y . . . your M . . . M . . . Majesty . . . I . . . I am taking a . . . a soldier to . . . to the guard room!"

The Emperor laughed.

"Well, you had better go there quickly. March!" The man pulled himself together and, with a foolish smile, again saluted. Then he turned himself round jerkily, and went in the direction of the guard room.

Two days later the Emperor went and made inquiries.

"Did a soldier come here the day before yesterday, drunk?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Did you lock him up?"

"Yes, your Majesty!"

"Well, then, you can release him at once!" and he handed the officer a written order.

Still another anecdote of royalty is that about Alexander II., son of Nicholas, always remembered for the kindliness and amiability of his nature. It was a particular favourite with the artists at the Imperial Theatre, because it had to do with Giulia Grisi, the singer, cousin of Carlotta Grisi, the dancer. Grisi and her husband, Mario, were fulfilling an engagement in Petrograd, and one morning it chanced that the Emperor was about to mount the stairs at the Marynski, when Grisi was coming down. Her two little daughters were on either side of her, holding her hands, and when the Emperor saw them he stopped and smiled.

"Ah!" said he, "Madame Grisi and her two pretty little *Grisettes!*"

Madame Grisi bowed and smiled.

"Pardon me, your Majesty, not *Grisettes—Marionettes!*"

Travelling still further back into the anecdotage surrounding the Emperors of Russia, Cecchetti remembers numerous stories which Petipa used to tell about Peter the Great and Frederick the Great.

Perhaps the most amusing is the one which dwells on the exceptional strength and size of the two.

Frederick the Great arrived one day incognito at Petrograd. He went to the palace and asked if the Emperor was at home. He was informed that his Majesty was out. Would the stranger care to leave a card? The stranger said he would. He put his hand

in his pocket, took out a silver rouble. For a second he held it between his thumb and two fingers. Quite slowly he bent it together, then handed it to the attendant.

"That is my card!"

When Peter the Great returned, the rouble, folded in two, was brought to him.

"Your Majesty, a tall, big gentleman came and asked for you this afternoon. He wished an audience with your Majesty!"

"Who was he?"

"I do not know, but he left this."

The attendant handed the rouble rather diffidently.

The Emperor took it.

"Who bent this money together?"

"The gentleman himself, your Majesty."

"Ah! Now I know who it is. Only Frederick and I could do such a thing!"

Cecchetti's first season at the Imperial Theatre thoroughly established him. His gifts and knowledge brought him numberless compliments, and the Marynski Theatre was fuller than it had ever been.

The following year he was appointed *second maître de ballet*, a post which drew him into closer contact with M. Petipa. Naturally, he was immediately asked to prove his capabilities by putting on a ballet. Now the word "tradition" had its fullest meaning at the Imperial Theatres. The State-aided opera, ballet and drama were not so much influenced by the whims of the public as private enterprises. The artists felt a sense of security; there was time to develop and think; they had no financial worries, and though there might be the danger of falling into a state of sleepy routine, the sheer pleasure of singing, and acting, and dancing, had full scope. The old theory of Charles IX., that artists should be kept lean, or no good would come

out of them, was not observed in Petrograd. Everything was done to help them; no expense was spared, and the past glories, the traditional triumphs, the echoes of famous names and famous productions were preserved. Many old artists were retained because they had danced in some ballet which was a landmark in stage history. If the Directors felt inclined to revive one of them they did so without consulting whether the public would like it or not, because the mutual understanding between audience and artists was so well established there was no questioning on either side.

The first ballet which Cecchetti was asked to revive was "Katarina, la Fille du Bandit," a very ancient affair, yet a pretty ballet, which had been written by Carlotta Grisi's husband, Perrot, to music by Pugni, the latter having at one time conducted the orchestra at the Marynski. When Cecchetti was a child, his father had often mounted this ballet, and he had kept all his father's notes, and knew it well. The Directors called him and made the suggestion that the ballet should be revived.

"Do you know it?"

"Perfectly."

"Are you sure you can put it on as it should be done? It is traditional!"

"Yes, but if I put it on exactly as it is written, it will be very old-fashioned. Many of the dances are out of date, and in the last act others could be introduced!"

The Director at that date was His Excellency General Sevolovsky, a charming man, with broad views in art. He told Cecchetti to put on the ballet as he thought best, and if he wanted the score revivified he was to go to M. Drigo, the *chef d'orchestre*, and he would supply what was needed.

So Cecchetti, with all his father's notes to help him, started rehearsing, and very often M. Petipa came to see how the ballet was shaping, One morning he was busily rehearsing one of the most effective scenes. It represented a typical bandit's home amongst the rocks, with a lovely entrance for the bandit's daughter against the sky-line! Before she arrived, the bandits, who were women, went through their manœuvres, shouldering arms, and marching about the stage. Petipa's voice resounded from the auditorium.

"Ah, it is evident you have never been in the army, Cecchetti. Soldiers don't present arms like that!"

With appropriate quickness Cecchetti replied: "You have never been in Italy, M. Petipa, or you would know that this is how *bandits* present arms in my country!"

Cecchetti put his famous *pas de deux*, "La Ciociara," into this ballet, and there was a good deal of amusement and chatter in the *coulisses*, because the young lady who took the part of the peasant insisted on having all her clothes made of silk, and discarded the quaint sandals for high-heeled shoes! Of course it was absolutely ridiculous, but she maintained that the Imperial Theatre was far too select for the rough peasant's dress, though it might be more appropriate to the character!

The ballet was very much liked, and won the fullest approbation of the Director, and even M. Petipa complimented the young *maître de ballet*.

Cesare Pugni, who wrote the original music to "Katarina, la Fille du Bandit," was a favourite topic of conversation with M. Petipa, whose sense of humour was rarely blinded by the annoyances and worries of producing ballets. It was during his reign that Pugni

came from Italy and was engaged at the Imperial Theatre as *chef d'orchestre*, where he remained for thirty years. He had made his début in musical work by writing airs which were introduced into operas by other composers, and in this way he "devilled" for Donizetti. His talent was undoubted, and Pugni turned out a number of operas, and quite twenty-one ballets for Milan, Paris and Petrograd. But he wrote with haste, and carelessly, and he was rarely sober. All his money was spent in wine, and his desire for more. His duties as *chef d'orchestre* included, of course, writing any dances, waltzes, marches that the *maître de ballet* required. Petipa was always in the position of "flogging the donkey." For days he was kept on tenterhooks, waiting some special item of music which he was wanting to rehearse. A sort of attack and repulse was going on every time the two men met.

"Well, Pugni, have you brought the march?"

"Oh, I hadn't time yesterday. You . . . you shall have it to-morrow."

On the morrow they met again.

"We must rehearse the march this morning. Pugni, have you brought it?"

"No . . . I started, but the cat scratched my hand, and I . . . I could not hold the pen. Don't worry, you shall have it in good time."

"But I must have it. You understand, I cannot wait any longer!"

"Yes . . . yes . . . to-morrow!"

On the morrow.

The company assembled; the march eagerly awaited. Pugni arrives; Petipa makes the usual inquiry.

"Have you brought the march?"

"Oh, I am sorry . . . I wrote it, but . . . I . . . I can't think what has become of it. I put it on my table . . . yes, I am sure I put it on my table. . . .

I will write another, and you shall have it. . . . Don't worry ! "

The following day, the same scene, the same question.

" The march, Pugni ; you understand, I cannot wait another moment for it. Have you brought it ? "

" Last night . . . when I got home . . . there were no candles. . . . I could not see to write . . . but don't worry, you shall have the march in plenty of time."

Petipa went to the grocer's and ordered a large box of candles to be sent to Pugni at once, and he felt more hopeful. But the next morning Pugni appeared, still without the march.

" Well," said Petipa, " what is the matter now ? You can't complain of having no light, for I sent you a quantity of candles yesterday ! "

" Yes ! "

" You received them, didn't you ? "

" Yes, thanks. . . . I did ! "

" Well ? "

" You see . . . it happened I was short of money . . . and I . . . well, I had to sell them . . . so . . . I couldn't see to write. . . . But . . . don't worry . . . you shall have the march in plenty of time."

After an endless verbal preliminary of this kind, Petipa found a reliable person, who was deputed to accompany Pugni to his home and remain with him till the march was written. Then it arrived at the eleventh hour, and was all that could be desired.

Life in the *coulisses* of the Marynski Theatre was far from dull. The main issue was that of maintaining the standard of the ballet, but this was not a simple affair ; it could only be accomplished with the healthy influence of rivalry and competition. Amongst the dancers themselves there was a spirit of challenge, and not only challenge, but also criticism, which was

Pictorial Press] [153, *Fleet Street.*

Enrico Cecchetti and some of his Pupils in his School of Dancing in London

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productive of much witty repartee. Cecchetti has always been particularly frank ; he is blunt and sincere in his criticisms, and quick with his tongue.

When he danced in the third ballet of his first season at Petrograd, there was another dancer, Monsieur M——, whose capabilities were not great, but he had been there many years, and he was excessively popular. The ballet was " Fiemetto," written by Cerito's talented husband, Saint-Leone. Mdlle. Cornalba, a noted *danseuse* of the day, was Cecchetti's partner, and he invented a new variation in their *pas de deux*, which started with a polka tempo, followed with a waltz tempo, and ended with a galop tempo. It was quite an innovation, and was much longer and showed more virtuosity than usual. The other dancer also had a *pas seul*, but it was short. Nevertheless, it was received with enthusiasm. When he came off the stage, one of his admirers said to him, in Cecchetti's hearing :

" Bravo, M——! that is how we dance in France. *Little* and *good !* "

Cecchetti waited quietly for his turn. Then he performed his novel variation, which brought him an ovation.

The same young lady who had made the announcement about how they danced in France was still seated in the wings. Fired with his success, he said as he passed her : " That is how we dance in Italy, Mademoiselle, *much* and *well !* "

When Loubet, President of the French Republic, visited Petrograd, and laid the foundations for the friendship which was afterwards to blossom into the Franco-Russian alliance, a brilliant gala performance was arranged for his benefit at the Marynski Theatre. Gala nights were naturally desirable to all the artists. First, because of the honour of performing before a representative audience of notabilities. The Marynski

had a seating capacity of two thousand, and when the five tiers of boxes were filled with Royalties, members of the court, representatives of the diplomatic service, of the army and the navy, and the rest of the house with distinguished civilians and dilettantes, the auditorium flashed with diamonds and thrilled with colour. That was one reason why every artist at the Imperial Theatre wished to be employed that night. Secondly, there was the further honour of receiving one of those presents which were freely distributed on such occasions by the Emperor and Empress, and which, it was known, were selected by them personally.

On the particular night when M. Loubet was the honoured guest, Cecchetti was still a new-comer to the Imperial Theatre, and interest was much centred in him. From the Grand Dukes he had already received many compliments, but he had never before danced at a gala performance there. The evening was brilliant in every way, both on the stage and in front of the house, and Cecchetti was presented by the Emperor and Empress with a beautiful set of diamond studs and sleeve-links set in gold.

This was the first of many presents which both he and his wife received from the Imperial family, and of consideration as well, for it devolved on him to be frequently at the palace during the season arranging the dances for the court balls. There he often came into personal contact with the Emperor and the Empress, and he grew to feel that they could be appealed to if he were ever in trouble. Once, and only once, he acted on this impression. It happened that M. Petipa was very ill for two years, and was unable to do any work at the theatre. Cecchetti was put in his place for the time, and being a stickler for etiquette, he did not allow anybody to interfere with him in his

work as *maître de ballet* during Petipa's absence. One morning he was busy rehearsing "The Sleeping Beauty," and found that M——, who was dancing the *pas seul* as the Blue Bird, had altered the steps. Cecchetti did not mind the alteration, but, for one thing, he did not consider they fitted the music, and, for another, he considered that he should have been consulted first.

"Why have you made the change?" he asked.

"It was not I who made the change," M—— replied.

"Who did, then?"

At that moment the voice of one of the most important teachers at the Imperial School was heard in the auditorium.

"It is I who made the change!"

"Well," said Cecchetti, "you should have consulted me first. I am the *maître de ballet* here, and the Imperial Theatre does not permit alterations to be made in this fashion"—which was quite true.

The storm gathered; the older artist laughed unpleasantly.

"Oh! Well, anybody would make as good a *maître de ballet* as you!"

"That is not the question. I am the *maître de ballet*, and therefore you should respect my position."

There was another retort which was not polite, and, to make matters worse, the orchestra took sides with Cecchetti and applauded him. His sense of justice was up in arms. He rushed off impulsively to the Director, General Sevolovsky, and laid the whole matter before him. Was it right, was it fair, to ignore his position as *maître de ballet?* M. Petipa himself would have never allowed any artist to take such a liberty? He was within his rights when he said that he ought to have been consulted.

Sevolovsky was courteous and appeasing. It was not the first time that he had had to soothe the highly-strung nerves of the artists at the Imperial Theatre. He asked that a statement of facts should be brought him on paper. This was done, and sent to him in due course. Then all those concerned had to wait for the decision, while they smarted with indignation.

After a few days the document was returned to Cecchetti, with the following remarks pencilled on the margin :

" I blame M—— " (mentioning the older artist) " for speaking as he did. I blame the members of the orchestra for taking part in a discussion which did not concern them. I blame M. Cecchetti, as a young ballet master, for taking exception."

When Cecchetti read the notes, he felt more affronted than ever. Acting on the impulse of the moment, he took a pencil, and wrote on the same document : " I blame His Excellency for not giving me the moral support which I should have as *maître de ballet*." On another sheet of paper he announced his resignation, and sent them both off to Sevolovsky.

After he had done it, and had cooled down, he began to repent. He began to condemn himself for having been too hasty. He had no real wish to resign, it was only that he felt galled and unjustly treated.

That night he had to go to the Winter Palace to rehearse the dances for the coming ball. Everyone there had heard the news of the dispute, and they greeted him with questions.

" Are you going to resign ? "

" Is it true you are leaving the Marynski ? "

" What about the dances for our ball ? "

" If you leave, we will engage you for ourselves."

While he rehearsed the dances, while he courteously begged titled ladies and gentlemen to be so kind as to

pay attention, while he followed them into corners where they had forgotten their cues and were chattering about the latest something-or-other, he was bitterly regretting that letter he had sent to General Sevolovsky.

Oh, how rash he had been! How foolish! It would have been much wiser to let the matter end with Sevolovsky's remarks.

He thought over every way out of his difficulty, and finally came to the conclusion that he would *ask the Emperor himself to permit him to remain.*

But again a difficulty presented itself. It was all very well to throw himself on the mercy of the Emperor! It was all very well to make an appeal to the highest power! It was all very well to imagine that it would be received with favour—but—how was it to be done? It was hard to say.

While the manner was uncertain, the matter was dealt with. Cecchetti wrote his petition and carried it about in his pocket. In a state of doubt, he went through the broad streets, so crowded in winter and so empty and dusty in summer; along the *prospekts*, and the *oulitzi*, and the *perouloks*, through and around the city of droshkies, where one has to keep one's eyes skinned to cross the roads. In the Nevsky he met a friend who was on his way to post a letter. Cecchetti watched him as he placed the stamp on the corner of the envelope, and on the instant the idea came to him. The Emperor was a human being; he lived in a house, and he received letters. Well, why not? No sooner thought than done. Cecchetti put his petition in an envelope, put an ordinary stamp in the corner, and . . . dropped it into the letter-box.

After he had done it he felt quite elated. Now everything would be right. The Emperor Nicholas II. would understand! An answer would soon be sent him! Unfortunately, the days went by, but no sign

or sound came from the palace, and Cecchetti's first satisfaction changed to uncertainty and then to genuine fright. Good heavens! what might they not do to him for having taken such a liberty? He was in the country of autocracy; it was not customary to treat the Czar in such a casual way.

Days went by, and still no answer.

One night Cecchetti went to the house of the Countess de Kleinmichel, and, feeling very worried, he asked advice of a Court official who was present.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me, Your Excellency, which you consider would be the best way of presenting a petition to the Emperor?"

"Well, there are three ways. First, you could hand it to His Excellency General Sevolovsky, the Director of the Imperial Theatres. He would hand it to the Sub-Director, who would pass it on to the Minister of Arts, who would send it to the Minister for Home Affairs, who would dispatch it to the Court Chamberlain. . . . It would pass from hand to hand for a long time before it would reach the Emperor himself. Secondly, you could stand outside the entrance of the Winter Palace, wait till His Majesty came out, and then throw the letter into his carriage—but this might be dangerous. You would be arrested for a Nihilist, and probably detained for a long time under suspicion. In my opinion, the third is the best way and the most effective. That is, write a letter, put it in an envelope, stamp it, and post it in the usual way!"

Cecchetti went home feeling more reassured, and three days later he was summoned by the Director of the Treasury of the Imperial Theatres. He arrived with a fluttering heart.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning! Well, it appears you have written a letter to the Emperor?"

"Yes, I have!"

"And you sent it through the post?"

"I did!"

"It is a most unpardonable thing to have done!"

"I'm sorry. But I could think of no other way!"

"Here is your answer!"

Cecchetti's original letter was handed to him, and pencilled on the top he read: "I consent to your demand!" Underneath was written in blue: "On the conditions which have been proposed to you."

Now the "conditions" alluded to involved a question of salary. Cecchetti had been made an offer which he had rejected, and on his side he had made a demand which had not received attention.

"Write on the corner here that you accept, and the matter is ended," said the Director.

Cecchetti shook his head. "No, I cannot accept. I will not write anything!"

"Why not?"

"Because that was not written by the Emperor!"

"How do you mean it was not written by the Emperor!"

"The Emperor says 'Yes' or 'No,' he makes no conditions!"

"I don't understand!"

"'I consent to the demand,' is all that his Majesty wrote on this paper!"

"Well?"

"The conditions in blue pencil have been added in this office!"

"Oh! You have quite made up your mind not to accept the terms!"

"Quite!"

"Very well then, write on the corner here that you refuse them!"

"No, I will write nothing!"

Finally the Director took up his pen and wrote on the letter: "Signor Enrico Cecchetti does not accept!"

There was another interlude of doubt and uncertainty before Cecchetti heard any more. But at length the day came when he received a letter from General Sevolovsky, asking him to come to his office. There Cecchetti was received with pleasant smiles, and told that his letter to the Emperor had been sent to the Director.

"I have it here," said Sevolovsky. "So you were not satisfied with my criticism! You went to the Emperor?" Sevolovsky shook his finger good-humouredly at Cecchetti. "Ah! what a revolutionist we have in our Italian *maître de ballet!* Well, the Emperor consents to your demand, and, in addition, your salary is to be raised."

Of course there was no room for anything but delight. Cecchetti shook the Director's hand. The Director shook Cecchetti's hand. At parting he paid him a graceful compliment, which referred to "The Sleeping Beauty," during which the dispute had started.

"Good-bye, Cecchetti! You are indeed reinstated. You left the theatre as Blue Bird, you return as the Prince!"

CHAPTER X

THE current of life ran swiftly in Petrograd during the winter months. Fashionable society followed its routine of theatres, balls and dinners, visits and skating. Along the Milionnaia, Gargarinskaia and Sergeievskaia, aristocracy took its way past the palaces of the Grand Dukes, past the palace of the Emperor and the palace of the Ministers, past the wonderful arch built by Fontana, an erection that is so heavy and ornate on the top that none would believe, when it was put up, there was sufficient support. "Very well," said Fontana, "put the heaviest cannon on the summit, and I will stand beneath. If it falls I am the only one who will be killed. But I know it will not fall!" And it did not!

Alighting from their handsome sleighs, the afternoon callers discarded their velvet boots and shubas at the door—like pilgrims visiting Mecca—and entered the well-warmed houses in elegant costumes. Ah, what a gold-mine the Parisian dressmakers found Petrograd in those days! They came each winter, and they sent the latest and most exquisite dresses to the houses of their clientèle, and left them. Many a smart woman in Petrograd returned home to find the most entrancing *confections* laid out on the bed, with nothing but the name and address of the modiste to indicate where they came from. Naturally many a woman spent more than she ought to when such temptation was put in her way, and the tragedies of dressmakers' bills hidden from husbands were numerous.

While aristocracy gossiped indoors, the servants waited outside, clasping tight the furs of their masters and mistresses; chattering about their employers, their horses, and their women. Sometimes there would be a blazing fire at the corner of the street, and they would all stand round and get what warmth they could.

Along the frozen Neva, the sleighs passed to-and-fro, the bells clanging tunefully on the harness. The drivers in their feather-bed coats and low hats looked like immensely fat old women. They sat in a bundle, with their arms stretched at full length before them, talking to their team, or emitting a sort of groan to warn foot passengers to get out of the way.

In the Nevsky Prospekt, to which all roads lead, every grade of society was to be seen. Merchants from the provinces, officers in uniform, students, peasants, business men, smart idlers, beggars, sight-seers and women, making innumerable purchases and passing on to the Gostinny Dvor (literally "The Strangers' Court") to seek bargains among the narrow labyrinths of booths and shops. Here indeed the East was cradled in the West. The old-fashioned merchant spirit, slow in thought, yet cunning, throve in an atmosphere which entirely differed from the commercialism outside. Some of the finest furs were to be purchased here, and there were numerous shops which traded in icons and church ornaments, leather work, curios and incense, and many beautiful bits of silver and gold and jewels were to be picked up. But the art of bargaining had to be resorted to; even to buy at normal price. In the fables of Kriloff there is a conversation which betrays how rogues cheat and circumvent in the Gostinny Dvor. The two men meet and the first says: "See, cousin, how God has helped me to-day. I have sold for three hundred rubles some Polish cloth that was not worth the money; it was to an idiot of an officer, who believed me when

I told him it was fine Dutch cloth. See, here is the money—thirty fine red bank-notes, absolutely new!"

"Show me the notes, friend," the second man responds. The notes are shown.

"Pah, they are every one of them bad! Out upon you, fox! do you let yourself be cheated by a wolf!"

The cold in the bazaar used to be intense. All the salesmen were wrapped tightly in their wolf-skin coats.

Along the curb of the Nevsky, itinerant pedlars offered their wares, calling attention to them in various little distinctive cadences, in the midst of which the low sad voice of the match seller: "Speechky, karoshy, speechky!" persisted like a priest intoning mass. How strangely pathetic it sounded in the clatter! All the grey mystery of Russia seemed to echo through that melancholy appeal!

The *équipages* in the road were as numerous as the pedestrians on the sidewalk, and the occupants as varied in rank. Grand Dukes dashed by, looking square and soldierly in their military overcoats, worn over their epaulettes; elderly diplomats, theatrical stars, pretty women, ordinary folk in hired sleighs—of which there were many grades, and for which the charges were varied—carts with shaggy ponies, and frequently a company of Cossacks, dark and handsome, seated on their high saddles, and holding their lances stiff and upright.

Sometimes, through the midst of the throng, the Emperor himself passed on his way to review his troops on the Champ de Mars, and crowds would rush towards the spot to see the long lines of soldiers pass. Here the guards in their tall sugar-cone hats; there the green-coated artillerymen. Troop upon troop they went by at the salute: "For God and the Czar!"

At the Winter Palace, and the Hermitage, balls of the most elaborate description were given, and cotillions

were danced by Grand Dukes and Duchesses, Princes and Princesses, foreign royalties and aristocrats. The Emperor Nicholas II. never danced himself. Sometimes the Empress led a cotillion, but they were both always present. The dancing invariably started with a polonaise. The doors were flung open and the couples entered in stately fashion, each performing that graceful dip which is like a series of semi-curtsys.

This was the life of the "chief city" of Russia in Cecchetti's day; a Russia full of possibilities, of latent power and coming development. As a dancer he met people of every grade of society; he taught the young pupils at the Imperial School who were aiming at a professional standard, he taught wealthy amateurs, and he supervised the dances at the Imperial Palace, and also at the palaces of the Grand Dukes and Duchesses.

The Grand Duchess Marie Pavlova, wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir—uncle of Nicholas II.—took lessons of him. One day she sent for him. Cecchetti went with all speed, and the Grand Duchess told him she wanted him to teach her a special dance.

"M. Cecchetti, I want you to give me lessons in the *pas de quatre!*"

Cecchetti gasped. He had heard something about such a dance, but he hadn't the faintest notion of what it was like. However, when a Grand Duchess asked for anything it was not for a *maître de ballet* to refuse.

"Certainly, your Highness, I will do so with pleasure!"

He left the palace cudgelling his brains as to how he could learn the dance himself. Had he been asked for a minuet, a gavotte, a bourré, a *pas de deux*, a *pas seul*, but—a *pas de quatre!*

Just at that time it was being danced at the Gaiety Theatre in London by a quartet of young girls, to a

popular tune by Meyer Lutz, which many people to this day can recall, whenever it is mentioned. In ball-rooms it was danced by two people, and it became the rage in two continents. Cecchetti thought about it earnestly for a whole day, then he remembered that one of his pupils, the Countess Bobrinski, had told him she had danced the *pas de quatre* at Biarritz a few months before. He called upon her at once.

"Madame la Comtesse, I have come to ask you a great favour!"

"Indeed, M. Cecchetti! What is it I can do for you?"

"Would you be so gracious as to teach me the *pas de quatre?*"

The Comtesse laughed. "What, the *pas de quatre?*"

"Is it very difficult, madame?"

"Not at all difficult for you, M. Cecchetti. You will learn it in two minutes!"

Cecchetti sighed with relief.

"I will tell you who can teach you how to dance it better than I, and that is the Baron de Wolff. You go to him."

The Baron de Wolff happened to be another of Cecchetti's pupils, and he went to him at full speed. It took him even less time than the Comtesse had predicted to master the intricacies of the dance, and then he was able to give the Grand Duchess Pavlova the fullest instruction.

The Duchess herself gave many balls, and she, in common with many other hostesses, liked to introduce something new into her dances. Cecchetti was always being appealed to for advice, and very often he was kept from rehearsals at the theatre because he was so busy arranging something fresh for one of the Court balls. Once the Duchess Pavlova got an idea that she would like to have a gavotte for one of her evenings.

"M. Cecchetti, will you please arrange a nice gavotte for me?"

Cecchetti felt that something more original than a gavotte could be thought of.

"Your Highness, don't you think that perhaps the gavotte is a little old-fashioned?"

"Perhaps. What would you suggest?"

"Something quite new; something invented for the occasion."

The Grand Duchess being quite ready to fall in with Cecchetti's proposition, he originated an excessively pretty Polonaise-Waltz, which was danced to the tune of the Louis XV. Waltz, by Galimberti. The novelty was so much liked that nothing would do but it must also be danced at the Hermitage, which, in addition to being a museum, had a beautiful theatre and ball-room, reached by a covered way from the Winter Palace.

Visitors to Petrograd have often expected to find that the Hermitage was a sort of monastery. They have gone away knowing that it is a magnificent palace, built by the Empress Catherine II., where she held a Court which was very different to that of conventional etiquette elsewhere. Every artist, poet, author, musician, was encouraged there by her. One of her rules was in strong contrast to those of other reigning sovereigns of the day. "Sit down where you like, and when it pleases you, without it being necessary to repeat the invitation a thousand times."

Amid the dazzling beauty of malachite and jasper, of gold and silver, old pictures and priceless jewels, the balls were held in great magnificence, and Cecchetti's Polonaise-Waltz was headed by the Emperor's cousins: the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich, the Grand Duke André Vladimirovich, the Grand Duke Corillo, the Grand Duchess Hélène Vladimirovna; and

amongst the dancers there was the Comtesse Bobrinski and the Comtesse Vertfeld, and a host of gentlemen and ladies of the Court. They entered with the usual polonaise step and took their places, but Cecchetti saw that he had made a mistake. He had not realized where the Emperor and Empress were going to sit, and when all the couples were assembled he found that their backs would be turned to the Royalties.

Of course this would not do at all, so, very hastily, he instructed the various couples to take a turn and a half, instead of a single turn, and to make certain evolutions which would bring them face-to-face with the Emperor and Empress. The hint was quickly taken up by everybody, and the contretemps avoided, but the alteration had been observed. The Empress noticed the speedy change, and while Cecchetti stood by watching, she turned to him :

"Bravo, M. Cecchetti; it was well done!" At the same time she handed him her fan as a souvenir. Later the Empress danced in the cotillion, and Cecchetti, still waiting and still watching, saw the Emperor walk to the table where the favours were arranged. He bent over and examined the various pretty objects, then, picking out a handsome cigarette case, he called Cecchetti.

"M. Cecchetti, as I do not dance, I should like you to have my souvenir!" and he gave the cigarette case as charmingly as the Empress had given the fan.

An immense photograph of all the Grand Dukes and the Grand Duchesses, the Countesses—in fact, of everyone who had taken part in the Polonaise-Waltz—was especially taken for Cecchetti. Everyone represented in the group signed the picture. Before it was sent to Cecchetti the Emperor asked that it should be brought for him to see. Cecchetti was present

at the inspection. The Emperor looked at it with interest; he examined the signatures.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty; I am delighted, indeed!"

"The signatures please you?"

Of course Cecchetti should have said "No, they are incomplete without Your Majesty's name," but he was too shy, and to his mortification he missed the great chance of the Emperor's signature being added to the rest.

When the Grand Duke Boris delivered the picture in person, Cecchetti tried to say something about his foolish mistake, but again the words died on his lips, and to this day he has no memento of the late Emperor Nicholas II.'s interest in the occasion except the memory of his queer little smile as he turned away after he had —to all intents and purposes—offered to put his name on the photograph.

This picture is another souvenir which Cecchetti had lost in Russia.

Occasionally the Emperor and Empress entertained lavishly at their summer residence, at Peterhoff. In the day-time Peterhoff, standing on the hill-side amidst the exquisite tumult of splashing fountains, leaping high above the trees, its cascades, its deep lakes, its avenues and terraces, was bewilderingly beautiful; at night it was like a fairy vision. No fête that was ever organized there could surpass that which celebrated the marriage of the eldest daughter of Alexander III., the Grand Duchess Xenia, to her cousin the Grand Duke Alexander Michailovich. The wedding ceremony took place in the large palace at three o'clock on the 25th July, 1894. Special trains took down the Ministers of State and public officials, Ambassadors and other invited guests from Petrograd. The company numbered between one and two thousand. In the wedding

procession there was the Czar and Czarina, the Queen of Greece, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Alexandra, who had not been to Russia since the Czar had ascended the throne thirteen years previously, the Cesarewitch, Prince Christian of Denmark, the Princesses Victoria and Maud, the latter now Queen of Norway. In addition there were twenty or thirty other Dukes and Duchesses and Princes and Princesses, and a host of Ambassadors and state officials.

At six o'clock the Emperor Alexander gave a banquet to the Imperial and Royal guests. Toasts were drunk, accompanied by flourishes of trumpets and the salutes of artillery. It was estimated that the fish alone for the feast cost *four hundred pounds*. Fifty of the finest sterlet were brought alive from the Volga and Caspian fisheries.

In the evening the grounds were exquisitely illuminated. The islets, fountains and palaces were ablaze with coloured lights, and perhaps the prettiest ballet that has been thought of was mounted in a theatre constructed in the centre of one of the placid lakes. The auditorium was a Greek temple, where the audience sat well under cover, and the ballet was "Pelleas." The subject and the setting were perfect, as the lake itself could be utilized to heighten the story of the loves of Pelleas and the water nymph. The whole of the arrangements were in Cecchetti's hands, he himself took the principal part, and he confesses that he never enjoyed any performance as much as he did that one gala night at Peterhoff.

Although such special grandeurs were only made for the pleasure of Royalty, and the Imperial Theatre at Petrograd was the haunt of the aristocracy, the

demands of the poorer classes were not forgotten when Nicholas II. became Emperor.

Perhaps no other country has succeeded better in democratizing the theatre than Russia. In Berlin a great deal had been thought of the Schiller's People's Palace, and in London the People's Palace has been looked upon as a highly successful attempt to provide amusement for a moderate sum. But in Russia the enterprise developed and spread from provincial to district capitals, and from these to remote villages. The "Narodni Dom," or People's Palace, of Nicholas II. was opened in 1900, as the result of similar developments which had been in progress during three or four years previously. Curiously enough, the first impetus did not come from Petrograd, but from Tomsk, in Siberia. A merchant, whose education barely fitted him to sign his name to his cheques, supplied the funds to the "Friends of Education Society," with the result that a theatre for workmen was opened.

Complete success followed the enterprise, for the revenue of the Society was doubled. Very soon the theatre was enlarged, and a museum and a number of class-rooms were added. While this was being done, a similar movement was starting in Petrograd. A philanthropic society began organizing fêtes for the working classes. The chief attraction was the open-air stage, where clowns and story-tellers caused much merriment. The charge of admission was about two-pence-halfpenny. Again the success was so complete that the Society was able to put on some of Ostrovsky's comedies, which teem with the kind of rough common sense and proverbial sayings that appeal to the large public. These were received with delight, and consequently a movement was set on foot to build a theatre where performances could be given in the winter. A

small theatre was erected, but later this was pulled down and an immense building put up, at the cost of 300,000 rubles—roughly, at that time, about thirty thousand pounds. Three years later the Society had established its enterprise on a sound financial basis.

After that People's Palaces began to spring up all over Russia. From Petrograd to Odessa, from Warsaw to Vladivostock, individuals and municipalities were building theatres for the masses. So great was the movement that wooden theatres were even put up for workmen who were employed in remote parts of the Empire.

It was a common fallacy thirty years ago to think of a Russian peasant as a man who could do anything with his axe, from shaving himself to building a house. There was an idea that his chief pleasures were drinking vodka and playing the concertina, and that he wrapped himself in his sheepskin coat, tied his toes up in rags, and went to sleep during the winter months. Yet the village he lived in boasted a theatre which he himself had probably built and decorated, and in which he acted as well. Even before Emancipation there were "factory theatres," put up for the benefit of the employees, and long before this the cult of the drama was encouraged by the Empress Elizabeth, who occasionally allowed the merchants of the upper classes to attend the performances at the Palace on certain nights, "provided they were properly dressed."

Side-by-side with the individual and municipal movements there were the Temperance Boards, which started operations by establishing tea rooms in opposition to the taverns. But the attractions of vodka were greater than those of tea, and the peasant came rolling down the village street on a cold winter's night just as often as ever. So the Temperance Boards changed their tactics, and also built theatres. They put them

up in various villages, and the stolid moujik and his wife came and thronged the benches. They carefully wiped their feet on the door-mat before entering, and they sat and waited for the performance to begin, the women on the left, the men on the right. Not a word was spoken, but the men fidgeted, and the women giggled. Close to the stage, on red-covered benches, sat the dignitaries of the locality. Then the curtain went up, and the play, which was a mixture of broad comedy and bloodthirsty tragedy, was breathlessly followed. The actors spoke their parts slowly, the actresses were shy. The piece lasted about an hour, and then a well-dressed gentleman entered, and talked to the steaming audience about the evil consequences of drink. In some of the villages dramatic performances of fair standard were given. Borodin's opera, "Prince Igor," has been performed with a village choir and orchestra.

Of course at Petrograd the People's Palace gave opportunities of seeing quite artistic productions. The Palace opened with Glinka's "A Life for the Czar," and since then many masterpieces of national opera have been given. Numerous small ballets were also put on by one or other of the artists from the Imperial Opera House, and Nijinsky himself danced there.

Amongst outdoor dramatic performances, none were better than those which took place in Christmas week. Every year an immense fair was held in the Champ de Mars, in Petrograd, familiarly known as the "Balagani." Gipsy caravans from everywhere came and set up merry-go-rounds and shooting galleries; there were numberless booths where bargains were displayed. There were dancers, and small theatres where remarkably good acting could be seen. From nine in the morning till nine at night the dramatic performances continued, and the members of the various companies seemed to act every hour of the day. During

that Christmas week, the cold aloofness of Petrograd was warmed by the unconventional life on the Champ de Mars, where the strain of Empire and the responsibility of administration was forgotten in the whirl of a merry-go-round and the dip of a swing.

CHAPTER XI

DURING Cecchetti's first season in Petrograd at the Marynski he thoroughly established himself as a *primo ballerino* who could not be surpassed in Russia, and when the summer came, and the theatre closed, he was in the pleasant position of still being the paid artist of the Imperial Ballet, but at the same time of having perfect freedom to take engagements elsewhere during the summer months.

In London there was an agent called S. A. de Parraviccini, whose offices were at 49 Duke Street. He advertised himself as the "SOLE AGENT FOR BLONDIN, THE HERO OF NIAGARA." He watched the progress of foreign artists, and stated that he had correspondents who kept him posted all over the world. When Cecchetti had danced in "Excelsior," Parraviccini had arranged to represent him in England, and as soon as he heard of Cecchetti's success in Russia, and found that he was free in the summer, he offered him an engagement to dance at the Empire. Cecchetti accepted, and it was then that he first met Katti Lanner, whose name is a landmark in the history of ballet in this country. She reigned supreme at that time as mistress of dancing and producer of ballets in London.

She was the daughter of the famous waltz composer Joseph Lanner, a Viennese, who vied with the elder Strauss as the finest waltz composer of his day. His waltz "Budapest" became famous the world over. When Cecchetti was in America with Ronsani in the

'fifties, it had become the rage there, so much so that Ronsani introduced it into one of his ballets and danced an effective and popular *pas seul* to its inspiring rhythm. In her youth Katti Lanner had herself been a dancer of much repute. She had danced with Cerito and Fanny Elssler, and never forgot that the latter had told her she would have a successful career. Mapleson brought her to England in the 'seventies for the express purpose of reviving interest in the old-fashioned, elaborate *ballet d'action*.

She married Signor di Francisco, himself a dancer. He looked after the vast amount of business which her work as a teacher and a producer entailed when she ceased to dance herself. She had the monopoly of all the ballet dancing in London when Cecchetti came in 1888, and supplied pretty nearly every theatre with her pupils.

As *maîtresse de ballet* she was unique, and had no rival in England, but in Paris there was Mdlle. Mariquita, who vied with her in this respect at the Porte St. Martin, and later at the Opéra Comique. The rivals kept a vigilant eye on one another, and did Mdlle. Mariquita put on "Autour de Paris" in the French capital, Katti Lanner was sure to put on "Round the Town" in London.

The Empire had been unsuccessful as a theatre. It opened the year before Cecchetti's arrival as a variety house. The programme consisted of a vaudeville performance and two ballets. Mr. George Edwardes and Sir Augustus Harris (at that time Mr.) were the *entrepreneurs*, and Mr. Hitchins was the manager.

The reputation of the average music-hall at that date was not enviable. The standard was low, and vulgarity often took the place of talent. Excessively strict people denounced all music-halls as cesspools of immorality. The mixed entertainments of variety

" turns," such as singers, acrobats and jugglers, mingled with short ballets, offered by the Alhambra and the Empire were therefore looked upon as an immense innovation. No wonder the polite guide-books of London stated that " there was no reason why a gentleman should not take his son to the Empire, where he could enjoy an entertainment which was conducted with circumspection."

As a matter of fact, the Empire foreshadowed the type of programme which is now popular, and it was also starting on a career of glory. The future home of dancing, it began with a couple of short ballets, which ran from nine to twelve months. Katti Lanner was responsible for a long series of successes, in conjunction with Leopold Wenzel, the *chef d'orchestre*, who wrote much graceful music, and Wilhelm, who was responsible for the stories and the *décor*.

Cecchetti was advertised as the " Marvellous Dancer," and the Press commented on his receiving " the largest share of applause."

The first ballet he danced in was " Dilara," which was produced by Augustus Harris, and arranged by Katti Lanner. The second ballet was " Rose d'Amour," one of Katti Lanner's greatest triumphs. It was a charming fantasy of the loves of the flowers and quarrels in flowerland. Two of Cecchetti's pupils, Mdlle. Adelina Rossi, of the Paris Opera House, and Mdlle. Edea Santori were first and second *ballerinas;* there was also Mdlle. Bettina de Sortis and " Aenea," the flying dancer, who was one of the earliest, if not the first, to trust herself to being suspended in the air by wires. As the " Mouche d'Or," she flitted about the stage from flower to flower, pouncing upon Cecchetti—who was the evil genius—at unexpected moments. Her husband looked after her with great care, and himself worked the complicated mechanism of wheels and wires.

Another and greater success was Katti Lanner's production of "Orfeo," in 1891, for which Wilhelm wrote the scenario, Telbin painted the scenery, and Wenzel wrote the music. The handsome Madame Cavalazzi, who had travelled all over the world as a dancer, played the name part superbly, Ada Vincent was Eurydice, and Cecchetti's powers of *mime* and dancer were happily blended as "Malignity."

In accordance with the usual enthusiasm which marked the first nights at the Empire, Katti Lanner had to appear before the curtain and respond to the applause. She was a big, imposing woman. She generally wore a tight-fitting black satin dress, a gold chain and locket round her neck, and a fair wig on her head. She smiled and bowed, kissed her hand to the public, kissed the children of the ballet, and put a crowning touch of satisfaction on an evening of approval.

Every year the ballets at the Empire grew more elaborate and important. "Dolly," a "grand fancy pantomime," followed the "Rose d'Amour," and in this Cecchetti and "Aenea" were again associated; he as the "Gnome" and she as the "Canary." Every year Katti Lanner's name became more famous and her supremacy as a teacher more extensive. She had a beautiful house on Clapham Common, and there she often entertained her friends, and was no doubt glad to get away from the friction of theatre life. In the *chef d'orchestre* at the Empire she had an excellent collaborator, who kept the balance between popular and classical music. He knew his "job" thoroughly, had himself been a violinist of repute, and, a Neapolitan by birth, had been a pupil of the Naples Conservatoire. For some time M. Wenzel had conducted at the Alcazar, in Paris, and he wrote the music for quite twenty ballets, and also several operas. At the Empire

he reigned supreme in his own domain—the orchestra—and he was inclined to look somewhat sceptically on the introduction of music which had not come from his pen. He and Cecchetti, as fellow countrymen, were good friends, but they fell out once over this very point. Katti Lanner wanted Cecchetti to dance a certain *pas de deux* of his own, for which the *chef d'orchestre* at the Marynski had written special music, and he said he could not dance it to any other. M. Wenzel at once had his doubts, and announced that he would not have any "common stuff" introduced into the ballet. As Cecchetti's music had been written by Drigo, who was the *chef d'orchestre* at the Imperial Theatre in Petrograd, he felt that the term "common stuff" was not quite just, and with some heat he said so. An artistic feud sprang up between the two. One night Cecchetti took exception to the pace at which certain parts of the dance were played, and a sharp repartee ensued.

"Please play a little faster," he begged, "or I cannot dance."

To which Wenzel replied: "It isn't my fault if you cannot dance, it is because you have rheumatism in your legs!"

"It isn't I who have rheumatism in my legs, it is you who have rheumatism in your arms!"

Of course such little verbal disputes did not mend the breach, and the *chef d'orchestre*, his dignity much hurt by the imputation that he was in fault, showed his disapproval by invariably descending from his conductor's platform when Cecchetti's turn came for the *pas de deux* and handing his *bâton* to the first violin, who took his place.

Katti Lanner didn't like the idea of the two artists being at cross purposes, so she invited them both to dine with her, and in her house the petty little difference

was adjusted; Wenzel and Cecchetti again became firm friends However, something else happened there that evening which was very nearly a tragedy. Katti Lanner had a small pet dog of which she was very fond. This little animal was always running about the house, and that evening, for some unaccountable reason, it jumped at Cecchetti when he spoke to it, and bit him slightly on the cheek. The wound was nothing to speak of, in fact it was not a wound at all, the skin was only grazed, but it was nevertheless painful.

In those days Cecchetti was living at Pinoli's, in Wardour Street; at that time an hotel as well as a restaurant. Most of the Italian artists in London forgathered there, and most of them had known Pinoli's daughter, and had sorrowed over her death, which was the result of a bite from a dog. Cecchetti had been particularly fond of the child, and when he heard that she had been seized with hydrophobia and died in agony he had been honestly grieved. It was not to be wondered at that the memory of the poor little girl haunted Cecchetti after he himself had been bitten by Katti Lanner's dog. He was living in the very place where it had happened; where the recollection of what had occurred was still alive. A terrible apprehension came over him that he would be the next victim! He went to bed that night, his brain full of wild fancies, and he woke in a panic! Good gracious, he was in a high fever; he could scarcely breathe; was this the beginning of hydrophobia?

He struggled out of bed, and, tumbling downstairs, burst into the small supper room, where some of the artists were sitting smoking. They all exclaimed, as though a ghost had suddenly appeared! Cecchetti stood before them, white as a sheet, the cold perspiration of terror on his forehead, exclaiming: "Speak to me, speak to me; I am going mad!"

"What is the matter?" "What has happened?" "Are you ill?" The questions came one after the other.

"I . . . I have been bitten by a dog!" Cecchetti replied, in a weak voice.

Everybody looked at him in consternation!

"Bitten! Where?"

He showed his cheek, which was only slightly marked.

"That is not a bite, *mon ami*, it is only a scratch!"

"But I tell you it *is* a bite, those are marks of teeth, and I am already poisoned!"

"Nonsense!" said one. "Absurd," said another. "There is nothing whatever the matter with you," said a third.

Presently Cecchetti felt more reassured and he was persuaded to go to bed.

In the morning he went straight to a doctor who lived almost opposite. He was also an Italian, and Cecchetti was able to pour out upon him, in his own language, all the story of the bite, and his terrible sense of illness. He was a clever man and pretty quickly understood Cecchetti's highly nervous state. He examined his cheek, then he went to Katti Lanner's house and examined the dog, and came to the conclusion there was nothing to fear. However, Cecchetti was not by any means reassured, so the doctor made him a suggestion.

"Tell me, my friend, are you fond of coffee?"

"I adore it!"

"Will you come to me every day for a fortnight, and have a cup of coffee with me after dinner? I will put a powder in it that will make you feel perfectly well again."

Cecchetti accepted with delight, and for two weeks he went daily to the doctor, who was an excessively

entertaining man. On each occasion he put a white powder into Cecchetti's coffee, and Cecchetti went away feeling stronger and more like his normal self. At the end of the fourteen days he was absolutely restored, and he thanked the doctor heartily for what he had done.

"I am most grateful to you. That is marvellous medicine you have been giving me!"

"Medicine?"

"Yes, the powders you have been putting in my coffee. They have made me perfectly well."

The doctor laughed.

"Would you like to know what they were?"

"I should be most interested."

"White sugar!"

"White sugar? But how could white sugar cure me?"

The doctor smiled again.

"You were not in need of medicine, my friend. It was your mind that was out of condition, not your body. You wanted mental physic, that was why I asked you to come here to take your coffee, so that I could distract your thoughts from dwelling upon the possibility of a horrible death."

That doctor's address was *Wardour Street;* it should have been *Harley Street!*

Italian hotels and restaurants abounded in Wardour Street and the neighbourhood, then as now. In Rupert Street there was the Restaurant Napoli and the Hotel Solferino, which had a handsome entrance. Here Madame Rossi, who was the *prima ballerina* at the Empire, had rooms which looked on to the back of Pinoli's. Her windows faced Cecchetti's windows, and only a few roofs intervened. One night, when Cecchetti was sound asleep, he heard Madame Rossi's voice calling him in his dreams.

"Cecchetti, Cecchetti, wake up!"

Cecchetti rushed to the window, and saw Madame Rossi opposite gesticulating.

"Yes, what is the matter?"

"You are on fire! . . . Your house is burning!"

Cecchetti hurried into his clothes and gave the alarm. There was a horrible smell of smoke; an excessive heat; but fortunately it came from next door, where flats were let to poorer folk of the neighbourhood. He climbed out on the roof, scrambled into the window from whence the smoke was issuing, and into a room full of suffocating fumes.

Two little children, a girl and a boy, dreadfully frightened, were crouching against the door. They had sunk down on the floor, helpless and forlorn. The curtains were on fire, the furniture was burning, the conflagration was spreading rapidly. He snatched up the two children and got them into his own room. Then the fire-engine came and there was a terrific fuss extinguishing the flames, and everybody was exclaiming against the parents of the children for having left them alone with a lighted lamp.

"It was disgraceful! . . . What could they be thinking of? . . . Oh, the poor children! Well, it would be a lesson to the mother and father!" etc., etc.

At length the parents arrived, and everybody awaited a touching scene of reunion. Reunion! They flew into a rage and wanted to whip their offspring for having been so careless! This point of view had not struck the onlookers, and it was as much of a shock as the fire itself.

After his third season at the Empire, Cecchetti made his final appearance there in 1892 in "Versailles," and left his pupil, Luigi Albertieri, to take his place. After that he remained in Petrograd, where his fame as a teacher was bringing him a colossal amount of

work. His name was of value, and lesser artists sometimes made use of it. Once, when his wife was in Italy, a *ballerina* arrived in Petrograd who called herself Giuseppina Cecchetti. Friends came to him and said: "So your wife is back!"

"My wife back? Certainly not; I had a letter from her this morning. She is in Turin!"

"But she was dancing last night at —— Theatre!"

"Impossible!"

"Well, go and see!"

That night Cecchetti went, and on the programme he saw his wife's name. Presently the *ballerina* came on the stage, and she proved to be a total stranger. She was not even a distant relation. Cecchetti went round to the back of the house, and got an introduction to her, without giving his name.

"You are a connection of mine?" he queried.

"Am I?"

"Your name is Cecchetti?"

"Oh!"

"Are you Italian?"

"No, I come from Baku!"

"But surely there are no families of the name of Cecchetti in Baku?"

"No!"

"Then why do you call yourself Cecchetti?"

"Oh, because my master told me it would be a good name for my profession. He said it would help me on!"

Cecchetti went to the police and stated that his name was being used without his consent. The police shrugged their shoulders.

"Can you not stop her? Surely you can forbid her; she is no relation, she hardly knows that the name is Italian!" More shrugs greeted his request.

"We can do nothing unless she commits a crime;

a murder or a robbery. As long as she is a peaceable member of society we cannot touch her!"

The new impetus to the art of the ballet, which the invasion of artists from the West had given, increased the work of the professors at the Imperial School, and not only was Cecchetti very busy there and at the theatre, but pupils, both from the school and elsewhere, begged for private lessons. During the first year he refused to take them. When the second arrived he consented to start a small class at his flat. It was on the top floor, and had not been constructed as a dancing academy. Still, it was spacious enough! The flat beneath was occupied by a civil engineer, and beneath him there was a teacher of ball-room dancing. The poor man had become accustomed to feeling the floor vibrate beneath his feet, but when the chandelier and ceiling followed suit, he went to the landlord and protested vigorously. He could not think, he could not work, he could not live in an earthquake!

The landlord said he had no wish to change any of his tenants. He was very sorry! He could only suggest one way out of the difficulty, that was for the civil engineer to go *and learn dancing himself!* However, matters straightened themselves without friction on either side, for Cecchetti found it necessary to move to a larger flat. There were some charming rooms in the house of General Bodinski. They were on the first floor over a chemist's shop, and they were admirable from the point of view both of size and position. Cecchetti and his wife and his three little boys moved to their new quarters, and for a time everything went well. The pupils went through their *battements*, their *ronds de jambe*, their *pliés*, their *jetés*, their *glissades;* they did their adagios and allegros, and there were no complaints. Everyone felt that an ideal place had been found, when the General was confronted one

morning by the owner of the chemist's shop on the ground floor. He came panting up the stairs to the top flat, where the landlord resided.

"I am sorry to have to complain Monsieur le Général, but . . . !"

"Well?"

"The dancing upstairs is making all my pots and bottles rattle. I am afraid that they will break!"

"Well, what can I do?"

"It is mostly when they dance quickly . . . if . . . if M. Cecchetti could keep his pupils dancing slowly it would be all right!"

The General went to Cecchetti.

"Ah!" he said, "it seems you have a magic flute. You can make even the pestles and mortars dance in the shop beneath you!"

"How do you mean?"

"The chemist below, he is afraid all his bottles of medicine will break!"

Cecchetti expressed his regret, and said he would have to find another place to teach in.

"No, no, *mon ami*. I don't want you to go, I won't have you go! Couldn't you make your pupils dance more adagios and less allegros?"

Of course the proposition was absurd, it was like asking a pianist to play his scales slowly and never to execute a run. Cecchetti said he couldn't do that, but he might divide his classes so as to lighten the weight on the floor.

He made some changes, yet they did not avert the catastrophe which followed. One morning a large bottle of benzine, unable to bear the vibration any longer, tumbled over on a gas jet, exploded with a bump, and the next moment the whole shop was in flames. They mounted to the ceiling, went through it, burnt out Cecchetti's dining-room, turned him and

his family into the street, and brought a gaping crowd of men, women and children, several fire-engines, policemen and dogs. The water poured forth in a deluge from the serpent-like hose, the firemen went in with their axes and broke down barriers. Every window in the front of the house was smashed, everybody's teeth were chattering, and presently immense stalactites began to form on various projections.

In the midst of the general turmoil, up dashed Cecchetti's pupil, Mdlle. Bakerkina—now Cecilia Cherri, *première danseuse* at Moscow. She had come many miles, and had heard of the fire through a friend sending her a message over the 'phone. She entreated the Cecchettis to come home with her; she offered them money; she was kind and excessively distressed. They thanked her gratefully, and told her that, in spite of appearances, they were really in need of nothing, but if at any future time they needed help they would come to her.

Presently the fire went out, and Cecchetti, with his wife and family, was told they could go back to their flat. Only the front rooms had suffered, the bedrooms were intact. Madame Cecchetti stood at the door of her devastated dining-room. Oh, how forlorn it looked! She bent over to examine the charred carpet, and a fireman behind her, thinking she had found some smouldering fabric and was trying to put it out, turned his hose on her stooping form!

What a day that was, and what a night! Cecchetti wanted to go to an hotel, but Madame would not hear of it! The bedrooms were untouched, there was no reason why they should turn out; besides, the whole family was in a state of nervous reaction, which made them shrink from strangers. They were shivering, and rather forlorn, they had suddenly lost touch with the ordinary routine of everyday happenings. Worn out

with fatigue, they at last all went to bed, but not to sleep. All night long the children fidgeted and whimpered, and Madame Cecchetti, her fur-coat over her nightgown, went to their room to soothe them. "We are so thirsty," they murmured; "give us something to drink!"

All the water pipes were out of order, and Madame was distracted. Still the cry of thirst continued. In desperation she seized the bottle of Hunyadi János standing on a shelf, and poured some out in a tumbler. The children drank it down quickly. But, alas! their thirst was not assuaged. At intervals during the dark hours the pleading voices asked for water, and from time to time Madame Cecchetti, worried, cold and perplexed, gave them Hunyadi János!

In spite of what had happened General Bodinski would not hear of Cecchetti leaving. The damaged part of the flat was repaired, the *salon de danse* was strengthened with elegant arches, and life resumed its normal course.

During the fifteen years that Cecchetti was in Petrograd he witnessed the swift changes in politics, art, literature and music which passed over the country.

He felt the wave of national enthusiasm which greeted Alexander II. when he went to Moscow, and declared war against Turkey in the name of the liberation of the Bulgarians. He heard the word "Nihilist" spoken with bated breath, and, without mingling in politics, felt the influence of that "Young Russia" which dreamed of development and progress. From the period of modern artillery and strategical railways of the soldierly Alexander III., he saw the country he lived in pass on to the kindly, courteous personality of Nicholas II., when manufacture and enterprise were making immense strides.

He witnessed the growth of thought, stimulated

by the publication of cheaper books and the extension of the book market; the passing away of such noted writers as Dostoievsky and Turgeniev; the renunciation of literature and the devotion to spiritual ideals of Tolstoy; the desire of the broad public for translations of foreign authors; the general advancement of intellect and understanding.

In art and music Russian painters and composers strained after individual expression, wherein the spirit of Russia was the moving force; in music it appealed through the Orientalism of Russian legends. Tschaikovsky had been recognized as the most distinctively Russian composer since Glinka. In 1879 he had gained the first of his successes with his opera, "Eugen Onegin," based on Pushkin's best-known poem. Airs from the opera were hummed everywhere, and all ranks of society followed the Emperor's example when he named his daughters Olga and Tatiana, after the heroines of the story.

Two years previously, Tschaikovsky's first ballet, "The Lake of Swans," for which the Imperial Theatre in Moscow paid him about a hundred pounds, was produced there with moderate success; then General Sevolovsky prepared the programme of the "Sleeping Beauty," which Tschaikovsky wrote with the enthusiasm he had felt for "Eugen Onegin."

This was produced at the Marynski in January, 1890. M. Petipa's inexhaustible taste made a wonderful spectacle of the "Sleeping Beauty." Cecchetti created the parts of the "Wicked Fairy" and the "Blue Bird" on the same night, and a little story lay behind his double impersonations.

Cecchetti, speaking with all due respect to Petipa's genius, always says that he had a spirit of mischief which was productive of a good deal of contrariness in affairs on the stage. He would select a tall man

and give him a diminutive partner, and to Cecchetti he once allotted an absolute " giraffe," so that Cecchetti remonstrated, saying that he was " a dancer," and not a " luggage porter."

His gifts of persuasion were remarkable. He once told Madame Cecchetti that he had a marvellous part for her.

" You will have to lie on the sofa, on the sofa, mind, but in a prominent place on the stage. You will be asleep on the sofa, and you will be there in every act, and, I assure you, it is a marvellous part, a part that an artist *mime* of such great talent as yourself should play magnificently. It seems nothing when I talk about it, but I assure you . . . ! "

Madame Cecchetti said she thought a super would be more suitable, and she did *not* play the " marvellous part."

When the " Sleeping Beauty " was being cast, Petipa was determined that Cecchetti should take the part of the " Wicked Fairy."

" That is *the* part, the best, the most effective part in the ballet. No other artist could play it; only Cecchetti is capable."

" But, M. Petipa," Cecchetti remonstrated, " the ' Wicked Fairy ' is a woman's part for one thing, and for another, I am not so old that I cannot dance. I am here as *danseur*, not as an interpreter of old hags ! "

" Oh, there you are taking exception again ! I tell you it is *the* part. It overshadows all the others, but since you make such a fuss about it, you shall dance the part of the ' Blue Bird ' as well."

Cecchetti rather shrugged his shoulders. He recognized the difficulty of such a task. To be a stiff. bent, wizened witch through two acts, and then in the third to relax into youth and dance was putting a great strain on the muscles.

General Sevolovsky was appealed to, and he sent for Cecchetti, doubtless expecting a controversy.

Very suavely he said that M. Petipa was anxious that Cecchetti should take the part of the "Wicked Fairy," but . . . !

"Yes," Cecchetti broke in, "I know. As it is not quite the sort of part for a dancer, I am to dance the 'Blue Bird' also!"

Sevolovsky looked up at him quickly. "Well?" he inquired.

"I am quite ready to do it!"

The matter being settled, rehearsals were started. The "Wicked Fairy" grew in interest as Cecchetti worked at it, but he had plenty of time to observe the general development of the ballet. One morning he was watching the *corps de ballet* dancing to the rhythm of the suave waltz, perhaps one of the prettiest waltzes Tschaikovsky ever wrote. Cecchetti felt that the choreographic interpretation was not quite satisfactory. According to the way Petipa had worked it out, the accent was coming at the end of the bar instead of on the first beat.

He leaned over to Petipa.

"Doesn't it strike you that there is too much contre-temps in that?"

"How do you mean?"

"The accent is at the beginning of the bar; they are making it seem at the end."

Petipa laughed. "Oh, you know as much about music as a crow!"

"Very well," said Cecchetti, "what does M. Drigo say?"

M. Drigo was the conductor of the orchestra, and a fine musician, but he was not inclined to be drawn into the discussion and gave a diplomatic answer which settled nothing.

Cecchetti was determined to thrash the matter out.

" Look here, M. Petipa, I will make you a bet ! "

" What sort of a bet ? "

" When M. Tschaikovsky comes to rehearsal to-morrow, I will dance him the waltz in two ways. I will dance it in your way—which strikes me as having too much contre-temps in it—and I will dance it the way in which I think the accent should be marked ! "

" Well ? "

" If M. Tschaikovsky says your arrangement is not contre-temps, then I will give you and everybody who is on the stage here a dinner in Paris. If he says my accent is not contre-temps, then you will have to give the dinner ! "

Petipa laughed and consented.

The following morning Tschaikovsky arrived ; a neat, precise, little man, with well-brushed grey beard, alert poise of the head, good clothes and charming manners. He was at once appealed to about the waltz. Cecchetti, who had arranged a sort of little *divertissement* of the two kinds of accent, went on the stage and danced the waltz. At the end he asked for the verdict.

" Well, M. Tschaikovsky, what do you say ? Is that contre-temps, and is it right for the waltz, or do you think the second accent, which is on the first beat of the bar, more in keeping with the rhythm of the waltz ? "

Tschaikovsky, always diplomatic, and possibly feeling himself between two fires, replied with care. On the one side was M. Petipa, who was mounting his ballet in a manner that was delighting him immensely, on the other there was M. Cecchetti, the gifted dancer who was creating two of the parts to perfection.

He demurred.

" Yes, well, of course, the waltz could be danced in several ways. It is capable of several interpretations ! "

" Ah, but," Cecchetti insisted, " would you call

my first way of dancing it contre-temps ; that is, against the beat of the bar ? "

Tschaikovsky said " Yes ! " and it was M. Petipa who had to stand the dinner in Paris.

When the day arrived for the dress rehearsal, Cecchetti was faced with further trials. A huge mask had been provided for him to wear in the part of the " Wicked Fairy." The dress of the " Blue Bird " was designed so that the wearer's hands were thrust deep into the wings, making it impossible for Cecchetti to handle his partner in the *pas de deux*.

Cecchetti appealed to M. Petipa.

" I can't dance with my hands tied up like that ! "

" Oh," said Petipa, " what can I do ? We must not interfere with the designs made for the Imperial Theatre. You *must* dance like that."

So Cecchetti went to the ever-patient General Sevolovsky. He couldn't, it was quite out of the question for him to dance with his hands encased in the wings, and furthermore, the mask for the " Wicked Fairy " would stifle him. Sevolovsky listened ; he was always open-minded. He asked Cecchetti what alternative he suggested.

" Let me put my arms through the upper part of the wings, then I shall be free to move ! "

Sevolovsky thought the idea was feasible, and he gave his consent, but what about the mask for the " Wicked Fairy ? "

" Let me make my face up. I can do it, and it will look better than the mask ! "

The demand caused a good deal of hesitation on the part of the amiable Director, because it had not been the practice to make up for character types. It was the custom always to wear a mask. However, Cecchetti was given leave to try the effect ; if it were not satisfactory, then he would have to wear the mask.

Cecchetti had a passion for the art of "make-up," and he had had a great deal of experience. He had made up as various animals and insects. Once, in a small ballet called "Le Caprice d'un Papillon," he had even made up as a locust. A mask had been provided for the part, but he had refused to wear it. He said he would prefer to "make up." But he was told that he could not put green paint on his face; it was made of a mineral, and would poison him. He was quite aware of that, so he bought himself some blue and some yellow powdered paint, and mixed it into a beautiful green. This he put all over his face, making the necessary lines and variations with black. On his head he put on a tight-fitting green cap with long antennæ, and, with green tights, the effect was perfect. One night, however, the audience shrieked with laughter over an unexpected revelation. Cecchetti caught one of the antennæ in one of the projecting wings. Off came the cap, and he finished his *pas seul* showing a human head of hair, crowning the green outlines of a locust's face. An excellent caricature of him in this guise appeared in one of the Petrograd papers.

Cecchetti's "make-up" as the "Wicked Fairy" astounded everybody, and the idea of a mask was discarded once and for all.

The gala rehearsal of the "Sleeping Beauty" was attended by all the members of the Imperial family and court. The whole theatre was crammed with the aristocracy of the city. The parterre was reserved for the Imperial party, and the reception of the ballet, though not exactly enthusiastic, was yet flattering to the choreographic part. The music did not cause whole-hearted praise, and the Emperor's "Very nice!" greatly chagrined Tschaikovsky, who had thrown so much joy and spirit into the labour of composing it.

Apparently the charm of the music was overlaid by

the happenings on the stage, and the amount of splendour and novelty which Petipa's taste and Cecchetti's impersonation and dancing had put into the ballet. The verdict of the public on the first night was similar to that of the Imperial party, but later the public came to appreciate the music, and the ballet became popular.

During the two years that M. Petipa was ill, Cecchetti, in addition to putting on the ordinary repertoire of ballets, revived "Coppelia" in its original form and produced Baron de Fittinghoff-Sehel's "Cinderella." He introduced Petrograd audiences to "L'Enfant Prodigue," and for the Grand Duke Vladimirovich he wrote and produced at the Ducal Palace, "The Triumph of Terpsichore." In 1892, Tschaikovsky's "Nut-Cracker" ballet was produced at the Imperial Theatre by M. Ivanhov. It was another of M. Sevolovsky's commissioned ballets. Madame Cecchetti created the *mime* part of the mother. Tschaikovsky was terribly worried over the delicious "Sugar Plum Fairy" music, but his imagination was stimulated by the discovery of the "Celeste Mustel" in Paris. He immediately commissioned his publisher to buy it, and paid 1,200 francs for it lest Glazounov or Rimsky-Korsakov might hear of it and make use of it first.

In 1902, Cecchetti was offered the post of Director of the Imperial School of Ballet at Warsaw. Acceptance meant a complete severance of the ties which he had made during the years spent in Petrograd, and he delayed before giving a definite answer. In Petrograd he had numberless friends and devoted pupils who wanted to keep him there; the former out of affection, the latter because they felt his departure would mean a serious blow to their studies. Cecchetti, on his side, was enormously attached to Russia; his art had been recognized and welcomed there; he had found a

home for himself and his work ; he had seen the ballet grow in force and popularity.

Yet his career there had not been free from trouble. A big combination such as the Imperial Ballet was bound to have divisions within itself which bred jealousies and intrigues and annoyances, and Cecchetti, in spite of his fiery impetuousness, was excessively sensitive. There were times when the bitter feeling of injustice impelled him to give in his resignation and put an end to his connection with the Imperial Theatre. Unfortunately, during the latter part of his time in Petrograd, his old friend General Sevolovsky had been transferred to the Hermitage, where his culture was eminently fitted to deal with the treasures it contained. The second Director, who followed later, was not as felicitous in his methods of dealing with artists. If he had been, it is probable that Cecchetti would have still remained. But it happened that the offer to go to Warsaw came at a moment when Cecchetti was excessively distressed over an affront which he considered had been offered to his wife. It was a small matter in itself, yet it revealed a lack of courtesy that was deplorable. Cecchetti felt it bitterly. Acting on the impulse of the moment, he accepted the post at Warsaw, and severed his connection with the Imperial Theatre and School.

He proffered his resignation ; the Director refused to accept it at once. He sent a letter saying that he would wait for three days to hear if Cecchetti was still of the same mind; if at the end of that time he still persisted, he would regretfully have to fall in with his decision.

For three days Cecchetti stayed in the house, fearing that he might meet some of his friends, who would persuade him to remain. They did come, but he refused to see them, and so the hours passed, and the

end of the time allotted for him to change his mind arrived. Even then, nobody could believe that he was serious. Many of the most important artists and professors entreated him not to go. Why hadn't he thrashed out the matter before acting so definitely ?

General Bodinski's voice joined in the chorus of entreaties : " Petrograd without Cecchetti will no longer be Petrograd ! "

However, the die was cast, and when the time came for him to leave Cecchetti realized that his departure gave him as much regret as it did his friends.

The last event of his connection with the Imperial Theatre was a grand farewell performance, which gave him the fullest proof of the affection in which he was held. For some years he had not danced. His work had been as artist *mime*, teacher and second *maître de ballet*, but the Director, the public and his fellow artists wished to see him once again dance a certain famous variation in a *pas de deux* which had been acknowledged as a *tour de force*. When he made his début at the Marynski as second *maître de ballet* with " Katarina, la Fille du Bandit," he had introduced it to Petrograd audiences, and now nothing would do but he must dance it once more.

The evening was one long scene of enthusiasm. Every important person, every noted actor in town was at the Marynski, and presents, wreaths and addresses were showered upon Cecchetti. He appeared first in a small ballet by Marius Petipa, " Don Quixote," in which he took the *mime* part of Sancho Panza.

Then came a *divertissement* which he had arranged for the introduction of his famous *pas de deux*, to which he gave the name of " Le Pas de Fascination." As Diavolo, he enticed the damsels round him, all of whom were his pupils : Trefilova, Preobrajenska, Egorova,

Godova, Kerzesinska (who married the Grand Duke André), Will, Tatarantova and several others.

The admiration which the public had for him was expressed to the fullest that night when he said "Farewell" to the home of his triumphs.

Finally there was the personal parting, when pictures were taken down; nails pulled out; there was a running to-and-fro, while boxes were packed; children picked out their favourite toys; friends came with presents; and the last vista of the receding doorway, as the family drove to the station. On the steps stood the fine old General Bodinski, his hand raised in salute.

In the records of ballets at Petrograd Cecchetti's name and that of his wife are associated with the creation of numerous parts. In addition to the "Wicked Fairy" and the "Blue Bird" in the "Sleeping Beauty," Cecchetti was the first to dance the part of the "North Wind" in Ricardo Drigo's ballet "The Talisman," and the principal rôle in the same composer's ballet "Calcabrino." Drigo, as has been said elsewhere, was the conductor of the orchestra at the Imperial Theatre in Petrograd. He wrote charming music, and had an adoration for Délibes which was very evident in his melodies and his style of orchestration. Another ballet in which Cecchetti created the chief part, was "Vestale," by Viacheslav Ivanov, the poet and leader of the modernist movement. Then there was his clever "Locust" in "Le Caprice d'un Papillon," already alluded to. The music of this ballet was written by Kopkopf, who used to be conductor of the orchestra at Covent Garden; and there was his creation of the lead in "L'Ordre du Roi," which marked his second appearance at the Marynski.

Madame Cecchetti, who was leading *mime*, created the parts of the "Queen" in the "Sleeping Beauty,"

" Cerce " in " Le Roi Candaul," " Princess " in " Raymond," the mother in " Cinderella " and the " Grand Duchess " in " Lac des Cygnes," the last in Cecchetti's estimation the most beautiful ballet that Tschaikovsky wrote.

Amongst the personalities whom he remembered above others in Petrograd, there was first and foremost that of the Emperor Nicholas II., and the Empress, whose amiability and kindness were extended to him repeatedly. Their affection for one another and their children was most evident at all times, and observable even on state occasions. Most of the Grand Dukes and Duchesses were Cecchetti's pupils, and the consideration which he received from them all won his respect and admiration.

In the world of literature and art he recalls the figure of Gorky, who was a great friend of the son of Kafi, the costumier of the Imperial Theatre. Nobody would have thought to look at Gorky that he was possessed of so much genius. He used to discuss socialism with fervour, and turn over hotly debated questions like a hoe turning a field. His sudden rise to fame was unprecedented. The Russian people went mad over him from the first moment that his short stories were published. The fact that he had come from the people seemed to bring him closer to the large public than any other author, and he was fêted and cheered and honoured. Then there were Monsieur and Madame Petapenko, both of whom were dramatists, and Levitan the painter, and Serov, and Serge Diagilev and Filosofov. The two last founded the review, " Mir Iskusstva " (The World of Art), in 1898, a publication of the highest literary merit and cultivated thought. At a later date both Cecchetti and Diagilev were closely associated with the fortunes of the Russian ballet in Western Europe. Diagilev was the centre of

a group of painters of the advanced school who formed a society connected with "Mir Iskusstva" and had their own special exhibitions, where they were able to exploit their own individuality.

Amongst stray recollections, Cecchetti's first introduction to Tchehov's sombrely realistic "Cherry Orchard" has never been forgotten by him. For weeks, indeed for years, the pathos of the last scene before the fall of the curtain, where the poor old servant is left, decrepit, babbling, yet faithful, crouching miserably beneath the window, while the voices of the family fade away, haunted him continuously. From another point of view he can always close his eyes and see the superb statue of Peter the Great in the Senate Square, and recall the anecdote of how Catherine II. waited for Voltaire to write an inscription, and how Voltaire put off the evil day, and at the last moment sat down and wrote: "A Pierre Premier, Katherine Seconde," which was duly cut in the stone and reads: "Petramu Permovu, Catherina Vtovaya."

CHAPTER XII

WARSAW, well named "Le Petit Paris," was a tremendous change from Petrograd. Though the very name of Poland is a symbol of national misfortune, the Polish people are the gayest of the gay; the city is full of animation and laughter. The public squares and parks are crowded; the cafés are well patronized; everyone seems smiling; there is a veneer of sparkle and froth which covers the heart of Poland, ceaselessly throbbing with pride of country.

The thoroughfares of Warsaw are very wide and handsome, and the palace which stands by the bridge is a monument to the splendours of Polish Kings. Beyond the beautiful old Gothic Cathedral the streets narrow down, and one might be in the Faubourg S. Antoine in Paris. Further out there is the charming little suburban palace and park of Lazienki, with its canals and orange trees in tubs, making a scene reminiscent of an Italian villa on the Lake of Como. In the grounds there is a delicious little open-air theatre, standing on an island in the middle of a lake, much in the same way as the open-air theatre at Peterhoff. The auditorium is like a small Roman amphitheatre, the stage is set in a ruined temple. Ballet and light opera were sometimes put on there, but mostly on special occasions, such as the visit of the Russian Emperor, or the inauguration of a new Governor-General

In the Saxony Gardens there is another open-air

ANNA PAVLOVA
in "Paquik."

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theatre, and still another, called the " Bagatelle," in the Ohm Gardens, a favourite resort of people living in Warsaw.

One is often tempted to think, after visiting one of these open-air theatres, that the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens, London, could be utilized for a theatre of similar type. An auditorium on the banks, a stage on the water ! Pessimists of course will say : " Look at our climate ! " but, on the whole, the summers are much better than they were in the days when people crowded into the " White City " and the Earl's Court Exhibition ! Think of the drought and heat of 1921, when people were pining to be out in the open !

The centre of dramatic and musical art in Warsaw in 1902, when Cecchetti and his family arrived there, was the Imperial or Grand Theatre, looked upon as the finest theatre in Poland. It was endowed, controlled and subsidized by the Russian Government, and had an opera company, a ballet, a dramatic company and a comedy company. There were three orchestras, two choruses, a school of dramatic art and a school for ballet. In the great building which stood in the big square opposite the Hôtel de Ville, there were two separate theatres and a concert hall. Up to 1906, all plays were submitted to strict censorship, and many amusing anecdotes of the methods of dealing with lines that might be interpreted as disloyal have been preserved. As in the days of Papal Rome, the results were more than often ludicrous.

Anything that suggested bondage or love of country was severely banned. For instance, the word " slave " was never permitted, usually it was replaced by " negro." Of course in some instances it worked quite well, but when the noun was used in a metaphorical sense, such as " He was a *slave* to his passions ! " the whole meaning was destroyed in the foolish statement that " He was a

negro to his passions!" In a play where a Catholic priest had to announce that he loved his country and his people, the censor put him in the embarrassing position of confessing that he loved his "wife and children."

Madame Modjeska, who also recalls these blunders in her Memoirs, had the greatest difficulty in getting permission to play "Romeo and Juliet" when she was in Warsaw. The Director of the Imperial Theatre had been replaced for a short time by an official who was excessively ignorant in the matter of drama and literature. He was mystified as to her reason for putting it on in Warsaw. He thought it was unworthy of her talent to want to appear in a play based on an opera! Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" had been given there a short time previously, and he considered the plot was not at all agreeable! Madame Modjeska explained that "Romeo and Juliet" was originally a play and it had been written by Shakespeare, to which the official replied that he had never heard of the gentleman!

National opera was a distinctive feature at the Grand Theatre, and such Polish operas as "Goplana," "Janek" and "Stara Basn," by Zelenski; "Manru," by Paderewski; "Filenis" and "Marie," by Statkowski; "Daiewcia Lodowcow," by Gruzewski, were given. "Halka" was a standing success, and was performed as many as eight hundred times. Moniuszko, who wrote it, was a pupil of the Warsaw Conservatoire, where Chopin studied when it was under the direction of Elsner. The Russian Government closed the Conservatoire in 1831, and it was replaced by the Musical Institute, opened by A. Kortski in 1850. Moniuszko died in 1872, but for many years he was professor of composition at the Musical Institute. When in later years Cecchetti went back to Italy, he was the only *maître de ballet* there who knew how the Polish dances

in "Halka" should be danced, and it was he who supervised them.

The School of Ballet at Warsaw had deteriorated a good deal when Cecchetti took up his duties there. He found that there had been a curtailment in the matter of salaries that had driven all the best professors of dancing away. Talent there was in abundance, and a tremendous willingness to learn. Cecchetti and his wife put all their energies into setting things right. He managed to get more grants from the Treasury Department in Petrograd, and he induced some of the most talented young dancers of the Imperial Ballet—who have since become famous—to come to Warsaw. It was there that Madame Pavlova, as yet unknown, danced in "Giselle," which to the dancer has been like "Ophelia" to the actress, Schumann's concerto to the pianist, Beethoven's concerto to the violinist, and "Isolde" to the singer. The great scene was always in the graveyard, where the wraiths of young girls who had died of love danced on their tombstones. If a human being chanced to come that way, the spectres seized the unfortunate creature and danced till death put an end to the partnership. The way in which Giselle saves her lover, who has come to weep over her grave, sounds the depths of a dancer's soul, and there is no need to speculate as to how Anna Pavlova interpreted such a part.

Mdlle. Sirone, who was *première danseuse* at the Imperial Theatre in Vienna, was brought to Warsaw by Cecchetti, also Madame Trefilova, who danced in "Coppelia," Mdlle. Sedova in "Paquita," Madame Preobrajenski in Tschaikovsky's "Lac des Cygnes," and Mathylde Kerzesinska.

The father of the latter was the most superb dancer of Polish dances that existed in the land of the Mazurka, the Obertass and the Cracovienne. Raymond

Kerzesinska and Popoff were brought to Petrograd, with several other Polish dancers, for the express purpose of dancing before the Emperor. Popoff was a little man, excessively round and fat, Kersezinska, on the other hand, was tall and handsome. He was sixty-two when he headed the six couples who danced the "Blue Mazurka"—so named because all the artists were in blue. Nothing so magnificent or so spirited had ever been seen in Petrograd, indeed no Russian dancer could approach the extraordinary *chic* of the performance. Kerzesinska was retained at the Imperial Theatre in Petrograd after that, and no artist could ever dance the Mazurka in Glinka's opera "A Life for the Czar" as he did.

In Poland the Mazurka is danced with the accent on the *third* beat, and it goes with a swing and a stamp, a rapture and gaiety that is indescribable. In all grades of society it reigned supreme, as the waltz in years gone by held the first place in every ball-room in the world, and it was always danced several times in the evening. Towards the early hours of the morning it was usually danced for the last time, and it was then called the "White Mazurka." As a rule it was followed by the "Obertass," another spirited dance with a great deal of stamping, and this would end the ball.

One of Cecchetti's earliest memories of Warsaw goes back to a morning when he was on his way to the theatre. As it was rather wet, he had on a black mackintosh, which almost reached to his ankles. Round his shoulders it had a short cape. As he went along the streets he saw that he attracted a great deal of notice. Presently people stopped and smiled at him. Many took off their hats and bowed low. Small children came and kissed his hand. The further he went, the more attention did he find bestowed upon him. At last he bolted into a cab, and scurried into the theatre.

There he met his newly-appointed *régisseur*, and he hastily asked him if there was anything strange in his appearance.

" No indeed, nothing ! "

" You are quite sure ? "

" Quite ! "

" But people have been taking off their hats to me, children have been kissing my hand. Is it the custom to treat strangers like that . . . or . . . ? "

The young man looked at him for a moment, then burst out laughing.

" Why," he said, " in that coat you are the image of Father ——," mentioning the name of a much beloved priest. " They took you for him, M. Cecchetti, and they were asking for your blessing ! "

In addition to his work as Director of the School of Ballet, Cecchetti put on many ballets of his own in Warsaw, and he also supervised the production of some new operas. It was he who produced Paderewski's " Manru," a fine opera, with a story which was somewhat stale. It is reminiscent of " Rigoletto," but it had some spirited gipsy dances in the first act. Didour, who was the Chaliapin of Poland, sang the bass part, and Leliva was the tenor. Podesti was the conductor, and the leader of the orchestra was a magnificent violinist whose genius was clouded by drink. The public adored his playing, and whenever " Trovatore " was put on the melody in unison for violins in the last act was always played by him alone. In " Manru " there was a young gipsy who was a violinist, and as he had to prove to the audience that he could play, he was heard before he came on the stage.

The real playing was of course done by the leader of the orchestra, who stood in the wings. Podesti always waited, bâton in hand, till the solo was over to give the signal to the orchestra. In the art of improvising his

leader was extremely gifted, and one night, having indulged his taste for spirits rather too freely, he started playing and wandered whither his inclination led him. Podesti listened enchanted, but he suddenly recognized, to his horror, that the violinist was going away from the key. Good God! when he stopped, the point of junction with the orchestra would be entirely severed, it would sound awful! With a face which gradually assumed an expression of despair Podesti followed the improvisation in the wings. On and on it went, beautifully, no doubt, but a dreadful catastrophe was to follow. Podesti felt sure of this. Then, to his astonishment, he heard the gradual return, the progress in the right direction, and finally, with a face wreathed with smiles, Podesti heard the end—in the right key!

Another opera in which Cecchetti took great interest was the "Life of Chopin," by Dell' Orefice, an Italian composer, who wove together numberless compositions of Chopin and used them to give the atmosphere to the story of Chopin's life. In an opera called "Duc Woiwoda," by Grossmann and Hoffmann, Cecchetti put in a *czardas*, which created a furore, and which has remained so popular that it has been used over and over again.

Cecchetti also put on a number of his own ballets, amongst them "After the Ball," which had been suggested to him by the picture by Gérôme of the same name. Cecchetti wove a little story round the well-known painting of two maskers who are fighting a duel in the snow. It started with the loves of two young peasants in a village. The soldiers arrive and take the young man away to join the ranks, the young girl implores him to stay. There is an officer who is smitten with the village beauty, and the elderly Mayor is also casting a roaming eye on her. The latter gives a big ball. The girl comes as Pierrette, the officer arrives as

Harlequin, and finally the peasant, having evaded his guard, mingles with the crowd as Pierrot. He sees Harlequin making love to Pierrette, and tries to draw her away. But, as she is not at all inclined to give up her little hour of triumph, she tells Pierrot to go and leave her to amuse herself. Harlequin laughs at Pierrot's chagrin, and Pierrot, mad with jealousy, strikes him. A faithful representation of Gérôme's picture followed the quarrel, when the two men fought in the snow, and poor Pierrot was killed. Gillet's popular waltz, "Loin du Bal," was heard in the distance.

"Piplet" was another of Cecchetti's ballets which he put on at Warsaw. "Piplet" is the name by which the concierges in Paris used to be familiarly known. The ballet was founded on an incident taken from "The Mysteries of Paris," by Eugène Sue. It dealt with the fortunes of a little modiste who dwelt in the Latin quarter, in a house guarded by a concierge and his wife—a dear old couple. She is quite in the centre of the *vie de bohème*, and one of the students is her lover. There is an elderly old roué from whom the young man has borrowed money, and this old horror, for his own ends, has the careless young fellow arrested and sent to prison. Of course, the way being clear, he makes ardent advances to the modiste, and she, backed up by her lover's friend, Cabriol, and Piplet, the concierge, who are silent witnesses of the elderly roué's love-making, accepts his suggestion of going to a fancy-dress ball with him. She puts on a pink domino, her admirer puts on a black domino. The instant they are gone, Cabriol pushes Piplet into a pink domino, and wraps himself in a black one. The whole quartet meet at the ball, and the little modiste, sure of the support of Cabriol and Piplet, humours her admirer, and promises to yield to his pleadings on condition that he gives her all the I.O.U.'s he has

received from her lover. He hands them to her, fatuously admiring, and then, being jostled by some dancers, is separated for a moment from his pink domino. Of course he is rejoined, not by the modiste, but by Piplet, and when the hour for unmasking arrives, the roué finds that he has been whispering tender words into the ear of Piplet, instead of the modiste. The pretty music was written by Luigi Mardoglio, whose gifts Cecchetti's father had humoured by the aid of three bottles of wine, a room, a piano, and a locked door. This ballet was also done in Italy.

On a much larger scale than either of these was Cecchetti's ballet "Eve," in eight scenes and a prologue. It typified the life of a heartless woman, influenced by Caprice and Fashion. Cecilia Cherri came from Vienna to take the part of Eve, Mdlles. Zulewsky and Krause were Caprice and Fashion, and Kulescha was Phedio, the young man who suffered from Eve's insincerity.

The prologue shows the adoration of Phedio for his statue of Eve, and his dream in which she and all the other statues in his studio come to life. Then there is the inevitable landlord who worries the penniless young sculptor for his rent. Phedio confesses his inability to pay, at which the landlord scoffs. What about the statue of Eve? He will take that instead of money. But Phedio refuses to part with it, and he is convinced that the statue itself would not agree to such a bargain. "Very well," says the landlord, "we will see which she prefers? You with your talent, or I with my money?" Half dreaming and half waking, Phedio agrees to the trial, and to his despair he sees Eve turn to the landlord.

The next scene showed the interior of a bailiff's cottage, where his daughter is flirting with a young peasant. Round her flit Caprice and Fashion, rousing

her desire for clothes and amusement, while her father scolds her for not attending to her work. Presently a Prince enters with a party of huntsmen, and asks for something to drink. Eve serves them, and pays special attention to a smart young Baron, who is evidently excessively taken with her. The party leave the cottage, and Eve, for want of something better to do, is again amusing herself with her peasant adorer, when the Baron returns for his rifle, and Eve, yielding to the persuasions of Caprice and Fashion and the Baron's suggestions, runs away with him.

The story goes on to a big ball at the Baron's house, and the arrival of the young peasant, who tries to persuade her to turn from her life of pleasure and return to her home with him. She gives him gold for her father, but he throws it on the ground, and, turning on the Baron and his guests, he strikes them in disgust and anger, and there is an uproar, in the midst of which the peasant escapes.

Various scenes follow, in which the gay, dissolute life of Eve is constantly disturbed by the efforts of the peasant to rescue her. Finally, she becomes the mistress of a young officer, who joins a North Pole Expedition. To escape her creditors and the results of her numerous follies, Eve accompanies the young man on board, and the ship glides away before the horrified eyes of her father and her peasant lover.

The final tableau shows the vessel held in the ice. Polar bears are wandering round hungrily, and the crew, half-starved and despairing, make a feeble effort to shoot them. They descend upon the ice, but their aim is uncertain, and the bears come upon them and kill them. Eve, alone, despairing, suffering from remorse, lies in a cavern of ice, breathing her last moments, while visions of her life and follies pass before her. As death comes upon her, the sun rises, the ice

gradually breaks beneath its warmth, and Eve stands in the centre of its beams. Like a passionless statue she died on the ice, but the glow of the sun put the blood of life into her veins and awakened her to womanhood !

This type of apotheosis always smoothed the shock of a tragic ending in the *grand ballet d'action* of the past, such as M. Petipa was accustomed to put on at Petrograd. They have gone completely out of date now, the taste for short ballets and *divertissements* having taken their place. But who shall say that they may not return ? In the revolutions of fashion the *grand ballet d'action* may, in all possibility, make its reappearance and be hailed as a novelty !

The story of the evolution of the ballet to its present form is much the same as the story of the evolution of Italian opera into music drama. Italy and France created a certain type of ballet, and the former instituted a certain type of opera, both have been altered outside their boundaries ; opera in Germany, and ballet in Russia. But even these alterations are showing signs of wear and tear. " Scheherazade " has lost its novelty and " Tannhäuser " is out of date !

Polish audiences adored " Eve," and the critics of Warsaw wrote columns about it. It was a happy event in a theatre which was the most difficult in the world to manage, owing to race friction. From the manager's point of view, the public of Warsaw was terribly puzzling. The Jews wouldn't come to the theatre if there was anything that attracted the Russians, the Russians wouldn't come if there was anything that appealed to the Jews, the Poles wouldn't go if there was anything that either the Jews or the Russians liked. As the Jews were mostly the shopkeeper class, the Russians mostly of the aristocracy, and the Poles a mixture of both, there was also the question of

cultured and uncultured taste to be thought of, so that on occasions the management catered frankly for the one or the other. Thus, they put on Halévy's opera "La Juive," knowing that it would appeal only to the Jewish population; and it did! But not without demonstrations of displeasure from both the Russians and the Poles, who, for once, joined hands and kicked up a fuss in the theatre.

Considering the immense capacity of the theatre, it was well-nigh impossible to make even a moderate business success, consequently a ballet such as "Eve," beautifully mounted, danced to perfection, with graceful music and pretty clothes, which was symbolical yet full of the philosophy of truth, was welcomed by everybody.

Cecchetti, having come from Russia, and being in the employ of the Russian Government, was taken for a Russian, and he found it very difficult to disabuse the Poles of the idea. He repeatedly told them that he was Italian, but the fact that he spoke Russian and could not speak Polish created a false impression. The interest and friendship which was shown him by the Governor-General, Prince Dolgouruki, and his wife, the Princess Dolgouruki, also gave credence to the idea.

Madame Cecchetti also suffered from the disadvantage of not being able to speak Polish. If she went into a Polish shop, no haste was shown to serve her, and she was generally asked if she *really* wanted to buy? Her three boys on their way to school used to be pointed out as "those little Russians," and occasionally they turned upon their tormentors and showed them with their fists that they would not suffer such gibes. Then the mothers of the Polish boys came and complained to Madame Cecchetti, and there was a great hubbub and discussion, in the midst of which

Madame vainly repeated: "We are not Russian, we are Italian!"

These three sons of Cecchetti were, by the way, excellent dancers, though they have none of them followed their father's profession. They often danced in aid of charity, and a great deal of amusement was once caused by them at an entertainment given by the Princess Dolgouruki at the Palace, in aid of the poor students of Warsaw. Two of Cecchetti's boys danced a Tarantella, one dressed as a boy and the other as a girl. The latter picked up the mannerisms of the *prima ballerina* so well that bets were made as to whether he wasn't a girl. One of the members of the audience came to Madame Cecchetti and said: "I have been watching very closely, and every movement of the little *ballerina* is feminine. It is your little girl who danced, is it not?"

"No, I have no daughter, I am sorry to tell you. You have lost your bet. Both the dancers are my sons!"

Another time these same two boys headed a hornpipe, which was a great novelty in Poland. The onlookers got so excited that they backed their favourites with cries of "Bravo, Ricardo!" "Bravo, Julio!" "Bravo, Luigi!" "Bravo!" "Bravo, Cesare!" Parents and relatives were most appreciative, and the situation was much like that of the poor pianist who, having scraped up enough money to give a recital, told his large family to sit in the front row and applaud everything he did. On the night of the recital the children watched their father and waited until he had ceased playing, then they rose *en bloc*, and, clapping loudly, shouted: "Bravo, papa; bravo, papa!" Even in these days the "Bravo, papa" concert is not extinct, for the assistance of the family as *claque* is a good way of starting applause, also of showing the affection of a

child for its parent, and vice versa. There was a gifted pianist and composer in London some twenty years ago who always employed a faithful bo'sun to start the applause. The pianist had become acquainted with him on the R.N.V.R. training ship on the Thames, and his large hands and general strength were a powerful aid to stirring up enthusiasm in any audience.

Cecchetti's sons, who so often danced for charity in Warsaw, are now men who follow serious professions in Turin. Cavaliere Cesare Cecchetti is a busy lawyer, Signor A. Cecchetti is Professor of Philosophy, and Signor Luigi Cecchetti is a Doctor of Music.

The revolutionary tendency, slowly growing and spreading from 1900, was marked by several upheavals in Poland. Under the rule of Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, suspicion and socialism grew apace until 1905, when the riots in Petrograd found their echo in every town in the Empire. In Warsaw processions of workmen paraded the streets, bombs were thrown here and there, troops charged and fired at the revolutionary crowd. There was a tremendous amount of shooting and looting of shops. A young man, sitting at a café, jumped up and threw a bomb at the Chief of Police. He killed himself, and injured the unfortunate official so that he was hardly recognizable. Yet he did not die! Madame Cecchetti, standing on her balcony, airing a pair of gloves she had been cleaning with benzine, heard the explosion and thought for a second that it was the effect of the sun on the benzine. But she soon learned from the cries of the people in the street, the shouts, and the looks of horror, what had happened.

Day by day Warsaw became more and more unsafe to live in. There were meetings, and conferences, open demands and secret plottings. Scarcely a street could be traversed where the shop windows had not

been smashed. All the Russian signs had been taken down and replaced by Polish signs. Outside every shop that belonged to a Pole, an image of the Virgin Mary had been placed so as to show the nationality and religion. No one dared to look anywhere, or to take any interest in anything, or a bullet would be sent through their head.

Progress in art under such conditions was naturally impossible, besides, it was physically repugnant to walk along the street and see the blood and brains of some unfortunate creature splashed over the wall!

So Cecchetti regretfully gave up his work in Warsaw, and having been long away from his native Italy, went to Turin, and settled there for a while.

His stay in Warsaw had scarcely been long enough for the results of his teaching to be gauged on a large scale, but it was due to him that the Imperial School of Dancing there was set on its feet again. Curiously enough, his best Polish pupils were not taught by him in Poland, but in Russia. It was at Petrograd that the exotic genius of Stanislas Nijinsky came under the guidance of Cecchetti. Nijinsky's father was already known in Poland as a dancer of the national dances of his country, but his son had gone to Russia to benefit by Cecchetti's technique, which was putting so much life into the ballet at Petrograd.

Nijinsky was always too delicate to go through severe training. He was neurasthenic and dreamy; a temperament that needed to be treated with gentleness. There was something elusive about himself and his art which did not fit well into the ordinary routine of work.

A pupil of a different type was Stanislas Idzikovsky, who has often been seen in London as Madame Lopokova's partner. He was the "Blue Bird" in the last revival of the "Sleeping Beauty" at the

Alhambra. Unlike Nijinsky, he was alert, normal, and capable of undergoing great strain. Another Polish dancer who was a pupil of Cecchetti's at Petrograd was Mathylde Kerzesinska, daughter of Raymond Kerzesinska, who made such a stir with his dancing of the Mazurka that the Imperial Theatre would not let him go. Mathylde Kerzesinska was dancing this year (1922) at Covent Garden. Still another Polish pupil is Leon Woizikovsky, who is well known in England.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Italy that Cecchetti returned to after such a long absence was no longer the same Italy as far as ballet and opera were concerned. The latter had perhaps survived the ballet, but even so, the glories of the 'sixties, the 'seventies and the early 'eighties were gone. The habit of looking to Italy for the best singers and the best dancers was but a memory of the past. Artists had carried the technique which had been the envy of the world elsewhere, and it was in Petrograd that opera and ballet had found a new impetus through its arrival. Even the dignity of criticism had not been left. It had developed into self-seeking and intrigue.

The only paper which stood as a landmark of Cecchetti's youth and which still exists was the one which belonged to the unique society called "Enigmofilo." The society itself had its representative group in every large town in Italy, and from the members of each came anagrams, acrostics, rebuses, which appeared monthly in the society's publication called "La Corte di Salomne." Some of the best poets and writers of the day have contributed to this paper, which was edited by Giuseppe Samborotto. Cecchetti and his sons have all written for "La Corte di Salomne" for years, and Cecchetti is proud of the fact that he has composed some anagrams which have defied discovery. The following has never been for-

gotten by the members of the society: "SPARPAGLIARE" (to scatter); "RAPPRESAGLIA" (to bring together).

Long before Cecchetti became a member of the "Enigmofilo" society his passion for writing had been cultivated by the family tradition of running a personal newspaper. Every member of the Cecchetti family sent the news of their doings to one another in a weekly news sheet, neatly written and carefully blocked out. Each of these budgets was headed with the pseudonym under which the contributors and editors wrote. Cecchetti's paper was called "Capriccioso," his father's was "Brontolone," his sister Pia's was "Tarlatan," and they all contained general news, personal news, poetry, and puzzles—on the last page. The following is a charade which Cecchetti sent at a later date to "La Corte di Salomne," and which very few guessed.

Quando su carta affacciasi
Da solo il mio *secondo*
Ti rissovvien dell' Aquila
Terror di tutto mondo
A cui l'etereo empireo
Tal un *Total* stampo
Che ne al primier ne all' ultimo
Scusa lettor dono.

mc—N—tc. (Mente) (The mind).

This paper exercised all its old influence over Cecchetti on his return to Turin, and he again became an active contributor. But otherwise he did not find much opening for his gifts and interests. There was some idea of his starting a school of dancing at Rome, under State aid, but Cecchetti did not welcome the idea with enthusiasm. In the meantime the management of the Teatro Lyrico in Milan pounced upon him to arrange the Polish dances in "Halka." Then in the winter he was engaged at Rome to assist in putting on several operas, amongst them Halévy's

" La Juive "—which had been rather a tough proposition in Warsaw—and Berlioz's " Damnation de Faust," with which he created quite a sensation by breaking through the old tradition of three angels, and enlarging their number to seven. Then he was engaged to go to Livorno, to put on the charming *ballet-mime*, " L'Histoire d'un Pierrot," in which his friend Rossi had appeared in London. From there the same company went with him to Pisa. On the return journey he met with an accident. A goods train on a siding was by mistake shunted on to the main line, with the result that a collision occurred. Cecchetti, his light luggage placed in the rack above his head, was thrown violently backwards while his valise, his handbag and various parcels struck him on the face and chest. His face was bleeding and his chest was bruised, but he was not half as much hurt as other passengers, who were terribly wounded and cut by glass and splinters. After a horrified pause and silence, there was a great stir and commotion. A special train was sent out from Pisa to the scene of the accident, and conveyed the sufferers to the station, where Red-Cross nurses were waiting in readiness. Each passenger was carefully examined and treated, but when it came to Cecchetti's turn, he felt that his injuries were so small in comparison to those which others had received, he was inclined to treat the whole affair lightly and refuse assistance. One of the members of the company plucked at the sleeve of his fur coat.

" Don't be a fool ! "

" What do you mean ? "

" Don't say there is nothing the matter with you. Let them look after you."

" Oh ! "

When Cecchetti was examined it was found that he was far more hurt than he imagined, and that he

needed as much attention as anybody. He was told to put in a claim for damages, and he asked for five thousand francs; he was granted — one thousand.

Round and about Italy Cecchetti toured for a time, but wherever he went the change which had taken place in opera and ballet was conspicuous. When he had gone forty years earlier to Petrograd, opera had then begun to swallow up the ballet because of the exorbitant demands of opera singers. Coming back to his own haunts he found that these very demands had in turn had a like effect on opera itself. The position was very much like an *impasse*, and seeing that his old love for Russia never left him, he once again took the journey to Petrograd, leaving his wife and children in Turin. There he was immediately pursued with demands for lessons, and so he opened a private school of dancing, and presently Madame joined him and pupils flocked to him.

Occasionally he went to other towns in Russia to put on ballets, and once he went to Moscow for this purpose. One night, when he had finished his work for the day, a friend came to him and invited him to come and see a young dancer who was making her début.

"I wish you would give me your opinion of her?"

Cecchetti consented. He was ushered into a comfortable fauteuil, and calmly awaited the débutante, who was none other than Anna Pavlova.

He recognized in her a pupil of another professor at the Imperial School at Petrograd, and he watched her with a mingled sense of pleasure and regret.

"Well," said the friend, "what do you think?"

"Ah, what a lot of talent she has!"

"Yes?"

" She has a future, but . . . ! "

" Well ? "

" It is a pity she has some faults. A great pity ! "

The friend who had asked Cecchetti's opinion was also a friend of Madame Pavlova. He promptly went to her and told her of the criticism which had been passed on her by the finest teacher in the world. She immediately asked Cecchetti to come and see her, but when he came face-to-face with the graceful, charming girl, who had so much soul in her eyes, he found it difficult to speak plainly. She, however, insisted.

" You told my friend last night that I had several faults ? "

" Yes, I thought . . ." and he proceeded to analyse the good and bad in her dancing.

" How long do you think it would take me to get over those faults ? " she queried.

" Three years ! "

" Will you teach me ? "

" I would be delighted to do so, but I have my school in Petrograd. I cannot leave that."

" I want you to teach me *entirely*, and nobody else for three years ! "

Cecchetti again pointed out his inability to comply, and then Madame Pavlova made him an offer. She would pay him exactly what his school was worth to him if he would give it up and devote himself to her. He was so struck with her great gifts that he accepted, and in his own words : " Those lessons were some of the most remarkable I have ever given.

" I could not give her her soul, or her inspiration, but I could give her the benefit of a technique which was strengthening, and which assisted her in expressing herself more freely. She had acquired a trick of pressing her hands on the hips of her ballet skirts,

and to correct this, I made her dance in short knickerbockers and a little coat for a whole year. What a marvellous worker she was, how hard she fought to conquer certain defects in her technique! Though, as I have said before, her art is prompted by genius, and mechanical defects could easily be forgiven her, still, she herself had a passion for perfection which stopped at nothing!"

To-day Madame Pavlova's name is a symbol of the spirit of dancing in every part of the world. In Italy, France, Germany, Russia, England, America—north and south—she has her host of admirers, and at the moment when this book was nearing completion, she started on a prolonged tour in Japan, China and India. Her energy is extraordinary! When Cecchetti was travelling with her in the United States in 1913, she danced in one hundred and forty towns in six months, roughly about six towns a week! Few, if any, other dancers could stand such a strain, but few are gifted with such powers of resisting fatigue as she is.

While Madame Pavlova was claiming Cecchetti's whole attention, his pupils were essaying to revive a taste for the ballet in Western Europe.

Mdlle. Lydia Kyasht, whose name was afterwards associated with the Empire for so many years, was the first to dance in London. She was followed by two more of Cecchetti's pupils, Madame Karsavina and M. Nijinsky, who made their first appearance at the Coliseum in 1909, in "The Firebird." Success was so great and instantaneous, managers began to think that public interest in the ballet was not dead after all.

In 1910 came Madame Pavlova, fresh from her training with Cecchetti and a series of successes in Denmark and on the Continent. She brought as her

partner M. Mordkin, and the stir and excitement of that season at the Palace Theatre is a landmark in the history of the Russian ballet in this country. Who can forget the first impression of Madame Pavlova as the dying swan in "Le Cygne," her inspired pathos and beauty! her fluency in "Papillons," her grace in the "Valse Caprice" of Rubinstein, and the riotous Bacchanale which she danced with M. Mordkin—an orgy enveloped in the luscious red and gold of autumn!

From then onward, a perfect craze for the Russian ballet took possession of the English public. Dancers who went back to Petrograd recounted their reception, and mentioned the large salaries which they could command in London. Those who had remained in Russia were inclined to doubt their stories. But there were evidences of prosperity which bore out the truth of the statements.

With such a start the sequel was to be expected, but it needed the personality of M. Serge Diagilev to make it assured.

The name of Serge Diagilev is as familiar to audiences in England as those of the names of the artists whom he has brought to this country. His sensitiveness to all the finer forms of art, his power as a critic and his culture, had already given a fresh impetus to art in his own country through the influence of the review "Mir Iskusstva" (The Art World), of which, with M. Filosofov, he was founder and editor. From being an enthusiast of the theatre, and particularly of the ballet, he passed on to being an entrepreneur. He began by engaging artists on the Continent—amongst them Madame Réjane—and bringing them to Petrograd. Then, from importing Western Art to the East, he thought of reversing the order.

When the revolution broke out in Russia in 1905,

he migrated to Paris, where he organized an exhibition of Russian art in 1906-7. This he followed up with symphony concerts of Russian music, and in 1908 he was responsible for the first season of Russian opera there.

In 1909 he managed to get permission to recruit a company of ballet dancers from the ranks of the Imperial ballet in Petrograd, and take them abroad. His request came at a moment when restless desire for a new form of interpretation was in the air. There was a sort of revolt against the rigid discipline, which not only kept artists from going away from Russia, but also from individual expression. During the summer months there was a certain amount of freedom, but most of the Continental seasons were in the winter. Some of the dancers had managed now and again to fulfil engagements occasionally while the Petrograd season was in full swing. Madame Karsavina, for instance, once or twice took French leave. Choosing an opportunity when she was not dancing at the Marynski, she went to Dresden, danced in "Cleopatra," and after the performance rushed back to the station. She rubbed off her make-up in the carriage, and caught the last train back to Petrograd. Another time she flew off to Vienna, and returned the same night, dancing two days later at Petrograd.

Apart from the individual desire of the artist to conquer fresh fields, the possibilities of new expression which the music of modern composers suggested was whipped up to fever heat by the arrival of Miss Isidora Duncan, whose appearances in her classical dances caused, at the outset, a furore.

The enthusiasm soon passed, but, coming at the moment when the general trend of thought was unsettled, she was credited with influencing the whole

future of the Russian ballet. There is no need to discuss the point. It is possible that the very absence of the accepted technique of the ballet which she displayed, aided the revolt against tradition, and acted as a sort of diving-board from which a plunge into the unknown waters of a new ideal could be made. All the leading dancers were more or less influenced, but chief amongst them were M. Fokine and M. Nijinsky. The latter having made an objection to a costume which he had to wear in a certain ballet and, having gained permission to change it, was suddenly dismissed, the alteration being taken as an excuse.

It was not the real reason, but it was used so as to cover the genuine opposition which the officials of the theatre were making against the efforts to break away from the Imperial traditions. M. Fokine, also tremendously under the spell of Miss Duncan's dancing, became absorbed in the desire to test all the resources of bodily movement that could best express the language of music.

The mutinous feelings which were gathering round the traditions of the Imperial ballet at Petrograd were unfavourably viewed by the Directors, and there was opposition on both sides. The amazing vividness of M. Fokine's choreographic ideas was not in accordance with their views. Such a gem of imagination as "Le Cygne," suggested to Fokine when walking with Madame Pavlova in the park and looking at a group of swans on the lake, was not received with any sign of appreciation. "Papillons" and "Le Spectre de la Rose" had to be danced away from Russia by Pavlova and Karsavina to find favour. The glowing *décor* of Bakst was also compelled to gain admiration on foreign soil. M. Fokine had started with a mythological subject, "Aglaie," which gained a measure of

success, but the atmosphere of stress and dissolution was not sympathetic or promising.

At this juncture M. Diagilev came and smoothed matters. He felt that the new thought was worth testing; that the artists who were upholding it should not be treated like naughty children, but given their opportunity. Instead of tying them down against their will, he suggested they should have a long *congé* and that he should be permitted to look after them. He and two other men got together a reserve fund, and with Madame Pavlova as *première danseuse*, he started a season in Paris in 1909—the first of many. Parisians were introduced to the astounding productions which represented the "New Russian School" of the ballet; they were roused by amazing combinations of colour, beautiful music and originality in choreographic conception. At first the seasons of ballet were experiments, and a good deal of money was lost, but as time went on M. Diagilev enthusiastically set to work to advance the growth of the ideal by still further welding dancing and music together. Most of the earlier ballets were dependent on music taken from the works of various composers. "Cleopatra"—originally known as "An Egyptian Night"—drew upon the resources of Arensky, Glazounov, and several other composers. Then a more consecutive feeling was created by interpreting the music of one composer, such as Weber's "L'Invitation à la Valse," which Fokine, in "Le Spectre de la Rose," adapted to such perfection. No happier combination could have been found than the music, the choreographer, and the dancers; Karsavina, as the young girl, an embodiment of grace and freshness and trembling thoughts, and Nijinsky, who exhaled all the luscious beauty and sensuous perfume of the rose! His flying leap through the window was reminiscent of that still greater achieve-

ment of Cecchetti's in the days of his triumphs in Naples.

This start was so satisfactory that M. Diagilev, who was the most courageous and intrepid of entrepreneurs, began to commission composers to write music for ballets. Stravinsky, whose "Scherzo Fantastique" Diagilev had heard when the composer was still a student at the Petrograd Conservatoire, was especially selected, and he commissioned him to write "The Fire Bird," "Petrouchka," "Le Sacre du Printemps," and the opera-ballet "Le Rossignol." When M. Diagilev started organizing his second season of Russian ballet he was left without a *première danseuse*, as Madame Pavlova had gone with her own company. He asked Madame Karsavina to replace her, but there was an obstacle to her acceptance. She would not leave her lessons with Cecchetti, and this was the case also with some of the other dancers. M. Diagilev pondered, and he came to the conclusion that if he could persuade Cecchetti to come too, he would be able to add the finest *artiste-mime* to his company, and at the same time make it possible for Madame Karsavina and others to continue their studies with Cecchetti.

Cecchetti, on his side, was not anxious to go. He had established a highly successful school in Petrograd; he did not want to move about.

"But what am I to do?" Diagilev inquired. "My company won't go without you!"

Once again Cecchetti's desire to remain in Petrograd was frustrated. He could not refuse such a persuasive man as Diagilev, so he accepted and started a connection which lasted, on and off, for twelve years. During the three years of his first absence Madame Cecchetti carried on the school in Petrograd, and but for the war she would have continued to teach there.

Cecchetti's association with Diagilev practically

put the whole technique of the *corps de ballet* under his control, and it also gave him the opportunity of creating several parts which have been associated with his name in latter years. From 1910 to 1914 fresh ballets followed one upon another, in Paris and in London.

Fokine, Stravinsky, Bakst, with Cecchetti's technique, and Diagilev as the director and intelligent adviser! That was the combination which produced some never-to-be-forgotten successes. There were other men associated with the *décor* and the music. As artists there were Benois, and Golovin, Roerich, Souderkine, but Leon Bakst overshadowed them all. At last London was introduced to a new feeling, a new range of colour and movement. The pink and white spectacles which had so long been attractive at the homes of ballet in Leicester Square, the crowded stage, the mechanical devices, were replaced by a type of art which awakened the imagination. Bakst dealt in firm, elemental colours and vivid contrasts. There was red and green and yellow and blue; clean and vivid. There was definite form and shape; impressions of vastness; impressions of looming tragedy and horror; impressions of gaiety and lightness!

Amongst the Bakst ballets "Thamar" stands out foremost. Few who saw that wonderful picture will ever forget the curtain rising on that scene of darkness and vivid light; those towering walls of Queen Thamar's castle; the great casement through which the inmates looked out on the turbulent river, the wild crevasses, the snow-white mountains of the Queen's domain. What immensities were suggested by the huge pillows on the divan and the small, feline figure of the Queen reclining amongst them!

How easily the whole scene and story could have been made ridiculous; how easily it could have become

just a common vampire episode; instead, it administered just the shock it was intended to give. Madame Karsavina's Thamar was a flashing, sensuous creature, whose actions were those of a wild animal devouring a quivering bird. From the moment the signal was made at the window and the muffled stranger was brought in by the guards in their heavy black coats and high thimble hats, the tragedy quickened through frenzy and clamour to the violent climax of death. The stillness which followed the night's orgy, the heavy sleep and the signal as the curtain fell!

How tender and fanciful was "Carnival" beside the fury of "Thamar!" Its sentimental gaiety, its simple revelry, the exquisite silhouette of figures against the plain green background; the stage bare except for the two little striped sofas. Surely these were the veritable thoughts of Schumann, these romantic flirtations of Columbine, Harlequin and Pierrot!

"Carnival" was originally designed for the Marynski Theatre in Petrograd in 1906, where it was played before a blue curtain.

Amongst the outstanding ballets which were talked about, and more often revived, was "Scheherazade," similar in splendour to "Thamar," but somehow avoiding the strictures of Mrs. Grundy.

The impressions of "Scheherazade" were less violent than "Thamar," but they registered memories of the highest points which have been reached in the art of the Russian ballet. Nijinsky's *mime* as the black slave, Madame Karsavina's wonderfully tragic death as Zobeide when she stabbed herself, and the fat, fussy Majordomo of Cecchetti, alternately wrangling and yielding as the ladies of the harem entreated and threatened. The on-rush of the negroes in copper and silver, and the final release of the jet-black fellow with the great pearls in his ears and the golden turban

on his head. What vigour there was in the colouring, what independence in method!

In looking back at the seasons of Russian ballet there was an interest quite outside the union of arts which they showed. Probably the large public did not notice the technical change in the form of the ballet, yet it could be traced in the early productions. In the "Pavillon d'Armide," the first of the ballets to be done in Paris in 1909, and which was first seen in London in 1911, the old influence of the *ballet d'action* was still present. Though the choreography was by M. Fokine, the old traditions were still to be traced. There were the *ensembles* and the *pas d'action*, which the revolutionaries at the Imperial Theatre in Petrograd had repudiated, yet it had all the feeling in the matter of contrast and tragedy of the later ballets. Furthermore, it had the personalities of Madame Karsavina and M. Nijinsky as Armida and the Vicomte de Beaugency, and Cecchetti as the wicked Marquis. How the Vicomte, on his way to visit his future bride, was held up by a storm, and invited to rest for the night in the Marquis' pavilion, and how he slept while all the pictures, tapestries, and china came to life, and Armida herself left her scarf on the young man's breast, was told with that thrill and suggestion which was unerring in the workmanship of the Russian ballet. In "Giselle," the famous ballet in which Grisi made such a furore in the 'forties, there was the choreography of M. Petipa, and in "Le Lac des Cygnes" and "The Sleeping Beauty" the older type of ballet technique was present. Otherwise there was a complete breaking away. In the Polovtscienne dances from Borodine's opera "Prince Igor," which followed "Le Pavillon d'Armide" and with which Fokine firmly established himself, the era of *plastic* expression had arrived. Only once was a return to the old idea made,

and that was in the deliberate revival of dancing in the spirit of Taglioni. The popularity of "Les Sylphides" was a little astonishing, for here was the second act of "Giselle," which our grandfathers and great-grandfathers had seen and loved and discarded. With different music and modern thought, there were few things more popular in London. "Les Sylphides," with Madame Karsavina and Madame Tchernicheva dancing to the rhythms of delicious Chopin extracts; "Les Sylphides," with its solo mazurka, its prelude and valse, its duet and *valse brillante* by the entire *corps de ballet*, with its long-skirted dancers, its moonlight and shadow—how tenderly sentimental it was, and how early Victorian!

"L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," with which Nijinsky and Bakst, with Debussy's music, created a union of intense beauty, was a never-ending delight, and "Papillons," which Madame Pavlova has spoken of as the most exhausting ballet of the repertoire, was a thing of fairy lightness inexpressible in words.

That sense of the unrevealed which is so often found in Russian literature, the sentimental and half-human mood, made "Petrouchka" unlike any of the other ballets seen in London. Who knows where the soul may hide, in what seemingly worthless body! To the eye Petrouchka was only a dancing puppet of wood and sawdust in a travelling booth, but the eye does not see further than the outer crust, and the public that gazes at a comedy knows little of the tragedy that lies behind. The first scene in which "Petrouchka" was laid represented the well-known Admiralty Square in Petrograd in the days of Nicholas I., and it was a lesson in handling crowds on the stage. The other scenes show the wooden compartments at the back of the booth in which the dolls are kept. The name of a new artist was associated with this

ballet, that of Alexander Benoist, who belongs to those Russian artists who are specially interested in the past periods of life in their own country. He is a special authority on the eighteenth century, and was thus the right man for "Petrouchka." In 1914, Benoist was very much in demand in all matters that had to do with the *décor* of the stage, and he was adviser in chief in this respect to the famous Art Theatre in Moscow. On the musical side "Petrouchka" is the *chef d'œuvre* of M. Stravinsky, as far as the public is concerned, for the whole symmetry of dancing, *mime* and music is perfect. It is difficult to recall a ballet which made so much impression. The rivalry of the two puppets for the favours of the dancer; the old showman magician, played by Cecchetti, by some occult power making them almost human. The scenes in the compartments at the back of the booth, so arranged as to give height and make the life-sized figures look small. The frantic, unbalanced love-making of Petrouchka, in whom strange emotions are stirring, and the elemental passion of the gaudy blackamoor puppet. How he lolls and goggles, and finally pursues his unfortunate rival, felling him to the ground with his sword before the gaping crowd in the Admiralty Square—and the climax! The old showman who picks up the thing of wood and sawdust and shows it to the baffled bystanders, the next moment to flee in horror at the sight and sound of Petrouchka's ghost screaming and tearing round the booth.

The ever-increasing spirit of novelty and boldness which characterized the creation of fresh ballets brought with them the cubists and futurists in art. Roerich is chiefly remembered at the moment for his association with the baffling "Sacre du Printemps." Larinov, another revolutionary, was responsible for the "Soleil de Nuit." Few who saw that scene could

forget that extraordinary mixture of the grotesque and real. Right across the top of the Prussian blue background there were ten red suns, with goggling white eyes, some with the face upside down. All the colours were strongly elemental, red predominating in the print dresses of the girls and in the whole setting. The tendency to develop grew stronger year by year, and there were some failures. "The Tragedy of Salome," with Souderkine's scenery and dresses, missed fire; "Jeux," described as a lawn-tennis ballet, scarcely survived its birth; "Daphne and Chloe" is barely remembered; and "The Legend of Joseph" was overweighted in every way. A vivid scene was that designed by J. M. Sert in the second act of "L'Astuzie Femminili," where a marvellous red tree stood in the centre of a far receding arbour. A beautifully staged ballet was "The Fire Bird," another Bakst triumph; beautifully fantastic and decorative, with Madame Karsavina, Nijinsky as the young man, and Cecchetti as Kotchi-live-for-ever. But perhaps for sheer perfection one must recall the entrancing opera "Coq d'Or," which owed its setting to the woman artist Gontcharova. It was not only decoratively beautiful, but it was so delicately humorous. Looking past the solid bank of purple-clad singers on either side of the stage there was the dazzle of the King's palace, so childlike and gay with its tinsel and pomp. The great rocking horse that made its appearance at the correct moment, the great pavilion of silk, the scampering long-legged messengers, the crowds of quaint creatures. It is to be hoped that London has not seen the last of the "Coq d'Or," or of such a perfect ensemble of story, music, art and modern ballet.

When 1914 arrived the Russian ballet had passed through a period of swift evolution. From 1909 a sort of creative ecstasy kept the leaders continually

Photo by] [*Stoll.*

LYDIA LOPOKOVA AND LEONIDE MASSINE
(in a characteristic dance).

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moving onward, achieving much, yet halting with a sense of perfection unattained. Some critics think that the Russian ballet reached its highest point of development during those five years, and that there is nothing further in store. But who can say? During the period of adjustment through which the world is passing at the moment, fresh ideas may be gathered in, to be boldly displayed at a later date.

CHAPTER XIV

AFTER the first year, when Madame Pavlova went with the Diagilev troupe to Paris and London, she started her own company and tours. In 1913 she was going again to America and she begged Cecchetti to revive for her a little ballet called "La Flûte Enchantée," Cecchetti did as she asked him, but, when he had completed his work, nothing would do but he must play the part of the old Marquis. Although he has always been terrified of the sea, he was delighted to do any service for his friend and pupil, and so he severed his connection with M. Diagilev for a time. Before his departure he witnessed the first performance of "Le Sacre du Printemps" in Paris. The music, as everybody knows, is by Stravinsky, and its merits have been discussed by the pros and antis, in and out of the columns of the London dailies and weeklies, with ferocious zest. When "Le Sacre du Printemps" was put on in Paris, the first night was what Cecchetti calls a "scandale."

At the rehearsal M. Diagilev asked Cecchetti what he thought, and Cecchetti did not mince matters.

"What do I think? I think the whole thing has been made by four idiots. First: M. Stravinsky, who wrote the music. Second: M. Bakst, who did the *décor*. Third: M. Nijinsky, who is the choreographist. Fourth: M. Diagilev, who has put so much money into it!"

M. Diagilev laughed at the criticism, and he did

not resent it. However, the first night showed that there were at least some who were of Cecchetti's opinion. People clapped, people whistled, people hissed; it was a war between those who were "for" and those who were "against." From one box a lady (?) leaned over and struck a gentleman (?) in the next *loge* because his demonstrations of disapproval were too forcible. He promptly rose from his seat and entered her box, where a loud discussion ensued. All the time the applause, the hissing, the booing continued. M. Diagilev rose and addressed the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen, at least let the performance finish!" If a turmoil of opinion can be summed up as success, then "Le Sacre du Printemps" could be pronounced victorious!

Cecchetti's tour with Madame Pavlova was one long series of journeys. With her, as her partner, was M. Zaeliz, and Mr. Daniel Meyer acted as her manager. She appeared at 140 towns in six months, a terrific achievement, and when Cecchetti is asked what he saw in America during this tour, he always says: "Railway stations, hotels, theatres and policemen!" The last was a very important personality, because Cecchetti invariably appealed to him at every town to direct him to the nearest Italian restaurant.

Cecchetti's catholicism in the matter of national food was one of the standing jokes of the company. The special train which carried them from one end of the United States to the other would arrive at a station. Cecchetti was seen to descend with a valise in each hand. As soon as he saw a policeman he made the usual request: "Italian restaurant, please!"

Most of the time he lived in constant fear of missing the train, so he made a point of always stopping at a hotel which was within a stone's throw of the station. Once when the company had been called for an unusually

early start Cecchetti stood on the platform waiting half an hour before the appointed time. He was priding himself on his punctuality, but as the moment approached for departure and he saw no signs of the train or the company, he wondered. He looked at the clock—it was undeniably correct, and the hands were speeding on past the appointed moment. Very doubtful and excessively worried, unable to speak a word of English, Cecchetti strode up and down the platform. Presently a member of the company came tearing after him, panting and gesticulating.

"Cecchetti, Cecchetti, where have you been? What are you doing here? The train is waiting!"

"Well, I have been here for quite an hour! Where is the rest of the company?"

"They are all in the train!"

"What, where? I have not seen a soul!"

"Over at the other station!"

"What?"

"We start from the other station, at the other side of the town!"

The Italian vocabulary could barely express Cecchetti's feelings as he was whirled through the streets, and at length reached the special train, alive with human faces peering out of every window!

American audiences—out West—were sometimes very amusing. At most of the towns in the United States, there was always a terrific amount of enthusiasm, Madame Pavlova's exit from the stage door being generally awaited by a crowd. There were demonstrations at her hotel, and round her car, but for sheer enjoyment nothing could beat that of a certain gentleman at Buffalo. He occupied the stage box, and from the wings nothing could be seen of him but the soles of his boots! Madame Pavlova called Cecchetti and asked him what he thought of the spec-

tacle. Had the boots any abstruse meaning? Had they been sent by the purchaser of the box to represent him, he being called elsewhere? When she went on the stage to dance she obtained a good view of the apparent phenomenon. She discovered that the boots were attached to a gentleman who was sitting with his feet out before him on the balustrade; his thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, a cigar in the corner of his mouth. He was enjoying himself thoroughly! Critics of American manners say that the attitude is peculiarly typical of the "wild and woolly West!"

When Cecchetti returned to Europe with Madame Pavlova he was due to tour with her on the Continent. That was towards the end of 1913. Their port was Bremen, and as soon as they were within distance of communication with land he received a wireless:

"The moment you leave the boat, come to me in Paris. Serge Diagilev."

Cecchetti did not want to go to Paris, so he replied: "Impossible!"

This was responded to at once with another wireless message:

"You must come, I am awaiting you. Serge Diagilev."

With promptitude Cecchetti replied:

"Regret, cannot, am engaged to Madame Pavlova."

This brought a further request:

"Beseech Madame Pavlova to release you. Serge Diagilev."

The last message was telegraphed after the tour in Germany had started. It sounded so serious that at last Cecchetti went to Madame Pavlova and showed her the telegram.

She said: "What do you want to do?"

Cecchetti answered: "I have a contract with you, and I am delighted to stay."

But as Madame Pavlova felt that perhaps M. Diagilev was in a difficulty, she suggested that Cecchetti should go to him as soon as she could find someone to replace him in the company.

In the meantime Cecchetti remained with her until she arrived in Berlin, where she played at a gala performance at which the ex-Kaiser and Kaiserin were present. At the end of the evening they both came upon the stage and complimented Madame Pavlova, who bowed low and kissed the Kaiserin's hand. When she again stood erect it was seen that the paint from her lips had left the imprint of a blood-red heart on the royal glove. The Kaiserin looked at it, unbuttoned it, and lightly rolled it up her arm.

A strange thrill ran through those who were standing near. A few months later—ah! what prophetic importance the incident assumed, and during the war how often it was recalled by the members of the company who had been present!

When Cecchetti found that his place had been filled and he was free to go, he travelled to Paris and was met at the station by M. Diagilev. After the numerous messages and telegrams which he had sent, Cecchetti imagined that he would immediately be told the important business which demanded his presence in Paris. But M. Diagilev was calm and collected. He was charmed to see Cecchetti; he chatted pleasantly about anything and nothing. He took Cecchetti to his hotel, and suggested he should dine with him that night. At dinner he again talked delightfully, and at the coffee and liqueur stage suggested casually that Cecchetti should come and see the ballet with him.

In the theatre everything pointed to a successful season; there was a good audience and plentiful

enthusiasm. Presently M. Diagilev came and sat down beside Cecchetti.

" Well, how do you like it ? "

" Immensely ! "

" Have you noticed that young man who is now dancing ; there on the right ? "

" Yes ! "

" What do you think of him ? "

" Good-looking, elegant and graceful. He has talent, I should say ! But he wants teaching."

" He must make his début in ' The Legend of Joseph ' in eight days ! "

" In eight days ? "

" Yes. Do you think you can manage to get him ready ? "

" Do you think I have a magician's wand ? " asked Cecchetti.

" How long will it be before he can replace Nijinsky ? "

" Two or three years ? "

" Very well then, take him. I place him in your hands entirely ! "

The young man was Leonide Massine. He worked terrifically hard with his master : in Italy, in Switzerland, in Spain, in South America, wherever the ballet went, there were Massine and Cecchetti, student and master, hard at work. His progress was very rapid ; it could be seen from week to week, and to this day he still goes to Cecchetti, for he is a firm believer in the technique of dancing, his ideal being a blending of the plastique and choreographic arts.

His sudden jump to the position of *premier danseur* was due to the fact that M. Nijinsky had objected to some unfavourable comments on the colour of his tights which had been made by the public. He had refused to continue dancing, and there was an opening

for a new dancer. Massine filled it with a talent that is ever gaining more and more recognition.

In 1914, on the eve of the war, Madame Cecchetti came from Petrograd to Turin to spend a few months with her family there, and Cecchetti, having a short holiday, was able to join her. The clannishness of family life in Italy has not its equal anywhere in the world, and Cecchetti and his wife are thoroughly Italian in this respect, as in all others. The thought of spending their latter years with their children and grandchildren round them is rarely absent from their mind, and the brief reunion which occurred in July, 1914, was a time of great happiness. They discussed their plans, as did so many thousands of people the world over, never thinking that they would not be able to carry them out. But within a few weeks they were startled with an event which had not been foreseen by the most far-sighted politicians. The whole plans of the Cecchetti family were broken up. The sons went to the front, Madame Cecchetti could not return to Petrograd, life and art were in a turmoil, and the Russian ballet seemed a very small thing indeed.

However, M. Diagilev had contracts with artists that were binding, and to fulfil his obligations he continued touring his company in the midst of turmoil and horror. There were neutral countries that could still be visited, and though business might not be good, the life of the Russian ballet would be kept going, and many artists would be kept occupied. Madame Cecchetti, finding it impossible to get back to Russia, accepted M. Diagilev's offer to join his company, and they went to Spain, and then, much to her regret, to South America. Her intention had been to return, if possible, to Italy, and to the last moment she resisted. But a few hours before the time of departure was fixed, Cecchetti returned from an interview with M.

Diagilev. She saw at once by his expression what had happened.

"You have accepted, after all?"

"I couldn't help it; he has such a way with him! Besides, he has tried four people to take your place, and none of them will do!"

In terrific haste the packing was accomplished, and the Diagilev company took "Scheherazade," and "Petrouchka," and "Le Pavillon d'Armide," and a number of previous successes to the magnificent Teatro Solis at Buenos Ayres, a spot which is "beautiful as God made it!"

They had many adventures on steamers which had originally belonged to Germany, and were worked by Brazilian crews. They were held up ten hours with a broken rudder; they succumbed to endless examinations of passports; they went through the anxieties of delayed luggage; they were ordered to disembark at unexpected moments; they were startled by rumours and scares and intrigues—but—the Italian restaurants were good!

On the voyage out M. Nijinsky became engaged to a young lady in the company, and the marriage took place as soon as they arrived. The management was not over-pleased at the match, and there was some friction. Nijinsky's nerves were already overstrung, and the constant journeys and hard work were not beneficial to his overwrought imagination. He became imbued with the idea that his life was threatened. It gained such a hold upon him that at one theatre, where he had a dispute with a stage carpenter, he feared to go on and dance. He engaged a detective who watched over him closely, and who tried every part of the boards to see if there was not some hidden trap. This was the beginning of the collapse which is now generally known, and which has, alas! deprived the

contemporary ballet of an exceptional and incomparable genius.

At Montevideo Madame Cecchetti had a cousin whom she had not seen for years. She had carefully kept her address, and as soon as she arrived she and Cecchetti taxied to the house, eagerly anxious to renew an old-time affection. It was quite early in the morning. Cecchetti rang the bell; an elderly lady opened the door. She stared at Madame Cecchetti, who was seated in the cab. Madame Cecchetti said to herself: "Who is that old woman at the door?" while the subject of her query was saying inwardly: "Who is the old woman in the cab?"

After the explanation of their presence and the revelation of their name the "old woman at the door" and the "old woman in the cab" found they were cousins. In the course of an effusive welcome they told one another gleefully about their first mutual impression.

When the tour was nearly completed and the time approached for the return of the company, a good deal of feeling was roused by the management, who had engaged the ballet for South America, refusing to fulfil their contract to pay the passage home. They complained that Madame Karsavina had been promised and did not come, that Stravinsky had failed to arrive as expected, etc., etc. There was a great deal of feeling, a vast amount of talking, and finally the whole situation was brought to a head by the company refusing to play one night when the whole house was subscribed. As the South American management was not in a position to hold out against such opposition, the passage money was furnished, and the homeward voyage was started, and what a voyage it was! Mine scares, submarine scares, and a big spy scare, which kept all the passengers in a state of fever. It happened that at Buenos Ayres

there was an Italian singer of much renown, who had settled there for many years as a teacher. She wanted to go to Paris. She was a charming woman; everybody liked her, and, in spite of the era of watchful suspicion which had set in, no thought of her being a spy entered anybody's mind.

Two days out the steamer was stopped. In the dawn all the passengers were routed out of their bunks, and told to come to the main saloon at once. Half awake they shovelled into their clothes, stumbled along the passages, and found themselves facing a British naval officer and two bluejackets, correct and official. Who are you, where do you come from, where are your passports, where are your papers, what is your nationality, why are you travelling?—all the war-time questions which roused such a despondent feeling of uncertainty and bewilderment as to one's own identity and mission in life!

The Italian lady was especially cross-examined, her cabin was searched and her papers gone through. Then the officer returned to his cruiser, followed by the two bluejackets, and the steamer was allowed to proceed on her way.

Naturally the episode caused endless discussion. Nervous people jumped when a cork flew out of a bottle of soda water, reports flew about that a bomb had been found on the well-deck, to be contradicted by the announcement that it was not a *bomb*, but an old *thermos* flask someone had discarded. The sight of another vessel was the signal for the passenger steamer to put on full speed and take an opposite course, and all the time the Italian lady was regarded with mingled doubt and pity. When Gibraltar was reached, signalled orders were received to proceed to Cadiz. More excitement, worry, protest, alarm!

At Cadiz the steamer was boarded by a French

naval officer and a couple of gendarmes, at which the general tension grew to breaking point. Again every passenger was questioned, and the fullest inquiry centred on the Italian lady, who was finally arrested and taken ashore, leaving her fellow passengers in a state of horror. It was said that she was connected with the famous spy Bolo, that a great deal of gold was found on her, and that there were letters from Bolo in her possession !

She was detained for fifteen days, during which time she was reported shot, extradited, gone mad, and shut up in a lunatic asylum !

After a time the whole matter was cleared up, and its origin brought down to a sordid professional jealousy. It appeared that the plot had been hatched by a rival singing mistress in Buenos Ayres, who had sent a wireless to an English ship stating that there was a spy on board the vessel by which Cecchetti and the Russian ballet was travelling.

From Cadiz the company proceeded to Barcelona to fulfil an engagement there. Cecchetti and Madame took up their quarters at an hotel in the big square, at the end of which stands the fine fortress. Madame Lopokova, M. Gavrilov, and some other members of the ballet were at an hotel on the opposite side. They had been there about a week, and Madame Cecchetti was returning home one morning after some casual shopping, when a terrific boom from the fortress shook the whole town. Shopkeepers, private residents, hotel-porters rushed out from every direction, hastily closing and barricading the windows. Bang, boom, smash ! Madame Cecchetti and her husband scuttled into the hotel, the door was firmly closed behind them, and the noise outside became deafening.

" What is the matter ? " Cecchetti inquired.

" Only a revolution ! " came the reply.

Cecchetti smiled: "Ah, we have just arrived in time!"

"Oh, any time is right! There is always a revolution here!"

For nearly a week nobody stirred out of doors. The food grew scarce, there were no fires, the cold was terrible. On the first night shrapnel scattered over the town like dust. Yet M. Gavrilov, who slept the sleep of a young man in the hotel opposite, was undisturbed. Although he was on the top floor, he was not touched in any way, though the hotel card of regulations which hung over his head was riddled like a Bisley target!

Business under such conditions was not too good. Still the Russian dancers gave three ballets while they were there, in a theatre which had holes in the roof and was devoid of warmth. It was amusing to find that some of the audience could not understand that ballet could be given separately, and not as a *divertissement* in an opera. There was an important subscriber at the theatre who came round after each performance and paid compliments. He looked somewhat perplexed, still he said nothing until the last night, when he inquired rather tentatively: "And when will the singing begin?"

The company's wanderings round Spain were full of adventures and difficulties. M. Diagilev himself recounts how an audience at an up-country town witnessed "Scheherazade" performed in the costumes and scenery belonging to "Prince Igor," because the former had not arrived. It was gently suggested to the management that it would be best to change the ballets, and put on "Prince Igor" instead. But the proposition was met with firm opposition. "Scheherazade" had been advertised, "Scheherazade" was the attraction, "Scheherazade" they would have.

Why? Because at Bilbao something had happened! Audiences there had considered that the poetic "Spectre de la Rose" was improper! A rose to come to life in the shape of a young man in the room of a young girl. Shocking! In the face of such propriety, "Scheherazade" was hastily substituted. But somehow the plot of "Scheherazade" preceded the performance, and the tale of voluptuous love in an Eastern setting did not seem to strike the Spaniards as being at all improper. The house was packed with men! The account of the success at Bilbao had travelled up country, hence the determination of the management to have it at all costs, even in the costumes of "Prince Igor!"

When the Diagilev company played in Madrid, then the conditions were delightful. Every night King Alfonso, the Queen and their children were present in the Royal box, and the principals were taken to them and introduced. Cecchetti remembers rushing in in his Pantaloon dress of "Carnival," and receiving the most delightful compliments on his performance. Amongst the anecdotes which he has collected he has one about King Alfonso which appeared in the Italian and French Press. The writer who recounted it stated at the outset that it was a little "shocking," but then how pleasant it is for the public to feel that Royalty can be as mischievous and unconventional as ordinary folk!

According to the Press cutting, King Alfonso was once stopping at Deauville, and there was a certain Duchess in the entourage who was as virtuous as she was plump. One day she was walking next to the King, who looked at her white, well-rounded arm with admiration. He remarked on its comeliness, and playfully pinched it just above the elbow!

The Duchess, being highly correct, resented the compliment and left his side brusquely. She went straight to the Duc di Sotomayor, who, as the ex-tutor

of the King, was a privileged member of the household. She showed him the bruise, which was the effect of the sprightly nip, and begged him to remonstrate with the King for behaving in such a manner to her.

The Duc was duly horrified, duly shocked, duly everything, and he found the King and gently expostulated with him. He stated that he had seen the bruise on the Duchess' arm, and he did not think that a King who was a good Catholic should permit himself to indulge in such pleasantries.

King Alfonso listened, smiled, said he was sorry, and that afternoon he again met the Duchess, and walked at her side. He told her that his ex-tutor had been remonstrating with him for his playful pinch, and that she had shown him the bruise on her arm. He was pleasant and smiling, then, as he finished speaking, he pinched her on the hip, saying: "I hope, Madame, you will not show *that* to the Duc di Sotomayor also!"

At some of the theatres in Spain the company was in great difficulties owing to the scenery not arriving in time. "Carnival" was once or twice played against black curtains on this account. Some say that the black curtain, or a curtain of any kind, makes such an effective background. But Cecchetti does not approve of them in any way, except from the point of view of utility. He thinks that the curtain leaves too much to the imagination. The public wants to see a proper setting; it doesn't want to visualize what is not there.

The wanderings round Spain continued for some time, but as business was fluctuating, and Cecchetti was anxious to get back to Turin, where his son was lying in hospital wounded, he managed to get leave for himself and Madame. But he found that it was one thing

to be allowed *congé* from the company, but quite another thing to get permission to cross the frontier!

With passports and entreaties, and influential backing, he made every conceivable effort to be allowed to return to Italy. The officials turned a deaf ear to his appeals. It really was very hard on him; however, he had made up his mind to get to Turin, and go he would. After all, there were other ways than the one which was supported by an official sanction from Madrid! He heard of a little steamer which was starting at once for Genoa. It was a queer, shabby craft, ostensibly a cargo boat, but in reality dealing in contraband goods.

Cecchetti managed to secure a cabin; it was about the size of a bathing machine, and less sumptuous. The bunks were so short it was necessary to hunch the knees up to lie in them at all, the saloon was a little hole somewhere in the stern, and there were black beetles and rats! For this accommodation Cecchetti paid eight hundred francs. But he didn't mind how much the journey cost as long as he could get to Turin, so he and Madame got on board the cranky boat and they steamed off. Normally the journey was only twenty-four hours—it took them six days! Every morning the steamer slunk into a sheltered spot in a harbour and remained there until it was dark, then it emerged and panted painfully along to the next hiding-place.

The captain was a native of Barcelona, and Cecchetti having learnt that to win the favour of a Barcelonian you must call him a Catalan, he made great friends with him. The Catalans, who are the most progressive people in Spain, consider Catalonia very superior to any other province, so the captain reverenced Cecchetti as a man who was able to recognize excellence, and he did his best to make him as comfortable as circumstances would permit. He himself never seemed to be away

from the bridge, his watchful eye was ever on the alert lest he should be pounced upon.

When Cecchetti at last arrived at Turin, he had the shock of finding his son in hospital, with his leg off at the thigh. He had gone to the front with General Peppino Garibaldi, nephew of the great Garibaldi, and after some months' service he had been severely wounded. Nine operations and twenty-five months of suffering had reduced him to skin and bone. The war was at an end, the great desire for peace was in everybody's heart. But Cecchetti's son did not live to enjoy it. He died soon after seeing his father and mother.

In the midst of Cecchetti's grief M. Diagilev wanted him and Madame to come to London, where he had started a season of Russian ballet at the Coliseum. The programmes included many revivals, but several novelties also, amongst them the exquisitely humorous " Good Humored Ladies," which had been done already in Italy. Cecchetti and his wife were badly needed to play the parts which they had created of the Marquis di Luca and the Marquise Silvestra. The company included most of Cecchetti's pupils. There was Lubov Tchernicheva, who came straight from the Imperial School in Petrograd and won her laurels, first in Paris and then in London. As a child she was so small in stature it was thought she must be younger than the stated age. There was Lydia Lopokova, who had had a good deal of experience before she came to London, both as an actress and dancer. She made her début in Paris in 1910, as Columbine in " Carnival," and in America she had appeared in New York. She was *première danseuse* in the " Lady of the Slipper " at the Empire, Syracuse, in October, 1914, and as an actress she played the part of Euphemia Kendal in " The Young Idea," renamed later, " Just herself." At

the Knickerbocker Theatre she was the Spirit of Pleasure in " Fads and Fancies," and at the Bandbox, Julie Bonheur in " The Antick."

There were also Lydia Sokolova and Stanislas Idzikovsky, Leon Woizikovsky and Leonide Massine. They and the rest of the company managed to arrive in small batches, thanks to the good offices of the King of Spain. Most of the artists had been stranded in various parts of the Continent.

Cecchetti, for some unaccountable reason, was denied the permission to travel to London, and he was distracted. He went to Rome, and stormed at the passport officials; he worried everybody he could think of. M. Diagilev telegraphed in various directions, to various authorities, and he had just managed to smooth the way, when Cecchetti, by force of a strong backing, obtained his permit. He was due to appear on September 5th, and it was only the day before that date that he was free to start. He and Madame Cecchetti arrived on September 5th, 1918, at one o'clock, and, without rehearsal, played in the evening performance at the Coliseum at eight !

Madame Lopokova, being new to London, was the winner of special comments. The critics pronounced her mistress of the technique of dancing, and the English public has been a faithful admirer of hers. Her Bacchanale in " Cleopatra " was praised, so was her comedy as the saucy Maruccia, the maid, in the " Good Humored Ladies."

Massine came upon the scene as a remarkable choreographist and dancer, and in a breath, all the old furore for the Russian ballet was revived.

The following year the Alhambra was packed nightly to see " La Boutique Fantasque," which again showed Massine's originality ; with Cecchetti bustling about as the old shopman, bearing the whole burden

of the action on his unbowed shoulders, with Madame Lopokova as the sweet, coquettish little doll in the daintiest of dainty ballet skirts, Massine as the masher doll, Madame Cecchetti excessively stuck up and superior with her equally lofty husband, Leon Woizikovsky and Sokolova with their deliciously humorous *pas de chien*, and a number of other fascinating dances. Surely there must always be an audience that will continue to delight in such exquisite fun! Another sensation of the same year was the "Three Cornered Hat," adapted by Martinez Sierra from the well-known Spanish novel by Alarcon, which has been translated into many languages; with Massine again as choreographist, music by Manuel de Falla, and *décor* by the post-impressionist painter Picasso. The simple story of the miller who has a pretty wife, whose charms attract the Lord-Lieutenant, who wickedly has the miller arrested, so that he can make love to her, and how she pushes him into the stream; how he takes his clothes off and hangs them up to dry, and retires meanwhile, in excessive dejection, to the miller's bed; how the miller escapes and, seeing the Lord-Lieutenant's clothes, puts them on, and how the former goes off amid jeers in the miller's coat and trousers, was received with enthusiasm—Massine as the miller, and Karsavina as the wife, and on one occasion M. Cecchetti as the Lord-Lieutenant, a part which he played without rehearsal so as to replace an artist who was indisposed.

In 1921 London was supporting the Russian ballet at three different theatres; Madame Pavlova was at the Queen's, Madame Lopokova at the Princes, and Madame Karsavina at the Coliseum. In 1922 came the elaborate revival at the Alhambra of Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty," with the unparalleled attraction of six *primi ballerini*, and a production

for which no money had been spared. Yet, in spite of all the expenditure, in spite of the wild enthusiasm of the first night, when men in the audience took off their evening coats and waved them, in spite of the attractions of Madame Lopokova, Madame Spessiva, Madame Trefilova, Madame Tchernicheva and Madame Egorova, the ballet was dull.

These are some of the outstanding memories of the seasons of Russian ballet in London. When will their glories be revived? At present the artists who fixed the high standard of excellence of the performances are divided up into small independent companies travelling about England and Scotland. The history of the Russian ballet has reached a point of perplexity. What will follow?

There are rumours of a British ballet which will surpass it, but up to now the attempts have not been promising. Ballet in England is always rather hampered by the standing idea that the hornpipe is the national dance of the country, and the tradition which clings round folk dancing. When the real British ballet does come, it will not be through the influence of either of these. Cecchetti says there is only one way. Sound financial backing, a suitable theatre, good subjects, fine choreography and original music. Russian ballet was made by the technique of Italy and France—the traditional technique of the world—English ballet must grow out of the same source. The only difference will be the difference of temperament which characterizes the two countries. Even when all these combined forces have been brought together it remains to be seen whether English audiences are attracted by English subjects. In Russia the public was never interested in ballets built on Russian subjects. The only truly Russian ballet that has made an assured success in Petrograd is "The

Hunchbacked Horse," which is founded on a Russian folk tale. Sir James Barrie has written "The Truth about the Russian Ballet." Who will write "The Truth about the British Ballet"?

CHAPTER XV

FEW men in any profession can boast of a more active career than Cecchetti. From the evening when La Santalicante, at Genoa, failed to catch him in her arms and he fell upon the stage, he has been continuously dancing, acting and teaching.

As a young man he was considered the greatest of all pirouettists in an age when the pirouette was looked upon as the highest feat that a dancer could perform. A favourite type of caricature was that of a top with Cecchetti's face smiling gaily from the pinnacle. Once a journalist, who went to report a ballet at Turin, over-estimated Cecchetti's powers as a pirouettist. He stated that he had been to the theatre the night before and had seen Cecchetti going round with the speed of a windmill in a gale. He went out for a cup of coffee and a cigarette, and returned to find Cecchetti still whirling. It was marvellous!

When the paragraph appeared no end of fun was poked at the unfortunate journalist and his cup of coffee. Was it coffee? Surely such a harmless drink could not blind him to the fact that the pirouette he saw *before* he went out was in the first act, and the pirouette he saw when he *returned* was in the second act!

In a ballet in Florence called "Aladdin," a special place was made in which Cecchetti could perform one *tour de force* after another. The King of the Cave sat and watched him, and there was a sort of contest

between them, as to how Cecchetti could make the most astounding pirouettes, and how the King could make the best comments on them. Cecchetti would make a pirouette, the King said : " You are the Prince of pirouettists ! "

Another pirouette.

" You are the King of pirouettists ! "

Again a pirouette.

" You are the God of pirouettists ! "

A fourth pirouette.

The King gasped, then gulped out : " You are the Devil of pirouettists ! "

From the outset of his career, Cecchetti has always liked to play a part rather than to dance, and when he danced, he generally impersonated a character or type. Anything, gay or grotesque, appealed to him. In the " Dea del Walhalla," in which he made his début, Cecchetti revelled in the satanic personality of Diavolo, and it was in this ballet that he made another of his sensational leaps, in the scene which accurately showed the " Pont du Diable " and the cavernous depths beneath. In the ballet the bridge was destroyed, and Cecchetti jumped six feet, over the chasm. There was no feather bed or any kind of arrangement to break his fall if he failed to accomplish the distance, and during the first performances the structure was so light that it shook unpleasantly when he landed on the opposite side.

In all Manzotti's ballets Cecchetti had parts which gave him an opportunity of showing his gifts as a dancer and *mime*. In " Excelsior " he was the evil genius, in " Amor " the mischievous Satyr, in " Rolla " the ragged urchin showing his unbounded affection for his brother. Cecchetti's leading characteristics were lightness combined with strength, and an impeccable sense of rhythm. He was quick in his body,

and also quick with his mind, and many times turned an awkward situation to good account. He tells an amusing anecdote of the *pas de chien*, which he invented for a charity performance at Petrograd. He was the poodle, running after the clown, who carried a little cane and put the dog through its various tricks. As Cecchetti wore a mask he couldn't see where he was going, and had to trust to the direction which his fellow dancer indicated. The clown, raising his stick, made Cecchetti hop backwards, and unfortunately continued the action so near to the footlights that the dog fell into the orchestra. Everyone was filled with consternation, and Cecchetti for a second lay quiet, wondering what had happened. But, as he found that he was not hurt, he jumped up and, howling pathetically, hopped on to the stage again, much to the delight of the audience.

When Cecchetti ceased to dance and became an *artiste mime*, he created a number of parts which gave him real pleasure. He has always liked the antiquated Marquis in the old-fashioned ballet, "La Flûte Enchantée," which he revived for Madame Pavlova, and in which he toured America with her. It was but a small part in the amusing story of a young peasant who is given an enchanted flute by a wandering Hermit whom he befriends. He has only to play a few notes and everyone is compelled to dance till he ceases. The old Marquis, who is making love to the young man's sweetheart, is a victim to the bewitching music, so is the mayor, and the ponderous judges who come to convict the flute player, and send him to prison.

Coppelus, the wizened toy-maker in Délibes' ballet "Coppelia," is another part that is intimately associated with Cecchetti. The crabbed old man who occupied his days in making mechanical dolls so lifelike in appearance and movements that a young man who

passes the window thinks the charming young person who kisses her hand to him is human, was a study which particularly appealed to him. His great opportunity always came in the scene where the young man is drugged by the toy-maker, who is imbued with the mad idea of drawing his soul from him when he is unconscious, and using it to animate his mechanical doll. Having made a few passes, he sees half in delight, half in horror, that the doll is really alive, and then discovers that he has been tricked, and that the wild, fantastic, lovely creature who smashes every toy in his shop is not his mechanical creation, but the young man's sweetheart in the doll's clothes!

The mother in "La Fille mal gardée" was a part which M. Petipa really wanted Madame Cecchetti to take, but she considered it was more suited to a man. When the ballet was originally done it was always played by Grisi's husband, M. Perrot, so Cecchetti undertook it, and he also played a similar part in "Giselle."

Most of the parts in which London audiences have seen Cecchetti during late years were created by him in Paris. His Majordomo in "Scheherazade" he never particularly cared for. He considered the costume ugly, even a little indecent, and he felt it was rather an indignity than otherwise to personate a eunuch in a harem! Critics in Paris praised his cleverness and humour in the part in full measure, and said they could not imagine "Scheherazade" without Cecchetti. Yet he was quite ready to relinquish it at any time.

Pantaloon in "Carnival," that vigorous and nimble young man which he played when he was over sixty, has always been very dear to him. The poor, foolish, duped fellow was so true to life, so genuinely human! What a foil he was to Nijinsky's sly Harlequin, so

insinuating and intimate ! M. Diagilev knew Cecchetti's weakness for Pantaloon, and if ever he complained of having too many parts to play in an evening he knew of a sure way to counteract the grievance.

" You are tired of smearing your face, you have too many changes, well . . . we will relieve you of playing Pantaloon."

This immediately cured Cecchetti, and stopped him from airing his grievances.

" Oh no, not Pantaloon. I was only momentarily fatigued; it does not matter, I will go on just the same ! "

" The Good Humored Ladies " was produced in Rome in 1917, with Madame Cecchetti as the Marquise —a delicious little character study—and Cecchetti as the Marquis. M. Diagilev went through almost every sonata Scarlatti ever wrote before he selected the music suitable to Carlo Goldoni's story. M. Bakst was meticulous about the correctness of the seventeenth-century costumes and *décor*, and M. Massine as the choreographist studied the comedy and took all its humour. In the absence of Madame Lopokova, who was cast for the part of Maruccia, the maid, Mdlle. Odette took her part at rehearsals, and showed great cleverness. This revel of seventeenth-century Venice in Carnival time is now as familiar to London audiences as " Scheherazade " or " Carnival," and Cecchetti's fussy, mincing, capering old Marquis will always be remembered for its finished comedy.

The showman in " Petrouchka " Cecchetti liked fairly well, and the shopkeeper in " La Boutique Fantasque," although ranked as one of his best successes, he only liked moderately.

However, whatever personal opinion he had of the parts he played Cecchetti is too much of an artist not to make them complete and distinctive, so that his

creations in all the ballets in which London has seen him play before 1919 stand out in the memory. Madame Cecchetti, who in her youth was a gifted *danseuse*, and who was always told that she had spoilt her career by marrying, has also created many parts in the Russian ballet seasons, and in Petrograd a ballet was scarcely ever put on in which there was not a character for her. When her husband opened his *Ecole de danse* in London in 1919, she at first took charge of the youngest pupils, for it is in teaching others that both Enrico Cecchetti and his wife now retain their zest for dancing. During the seasons of Russian ballet this school was not only the place where young English dancers were being trained, but it was also an exercise room for the *primi ballerini*. There one could see what a hard life dancers lead, and what an exacting profession they follow. To the outside public it all seems so charming and easy, such ephemeral work in comparison to sitting at a typewriter, or putting figures down in ledgers, or serving in a shop, or conducting a big business. According to a young girl who sat in front of me at a certain ballet, dancing was the one profession in the world where big salaries were given, and no work done.

"I wish I was a dancer," she said; "it's just nothing but going on and getting flowers and compliments."

If that were true, everybody would be a dancer. The world would be full of *primi ballerini*, and there would be very little typing or office work done. The hosts of girls who try dancing and fail are not heard of; it is only the few who succeed who create the erroneous idea of dancing being an easy profession. At the Imperial School in Petrograd the examinations at the end of the first year resulted in the rejection of a number of pupils who were, for one reason or another, considered unsuitable for a dancer's career.

At the outset Cecchetti says there must be three natural gifts: (1) strength *sur les pointes*; (2) high *elevation*; (3) great facility in turning. In other words, blessed are they who are not tight about the hips, whose instep is firm and pliant, and whose limbs are supple and agile! For these there is hope, but even such gifts are not sufficient. There is the question of looks. A girl must not be too tall; she should have a face capable of looking pretty on the stage; she must be intelligent. To be really great she should have the soul of an artist and the determination of a prize fighter.

Again, with all these endowments there are difficulties. Good training on right lines from the outset is not always secured, and efforts to correct faults at a later period are often delayed too long. In this respect the art of the ballet dancer is more rigorous than any other; it insists on perfection from the first. The child of eight is as much in need of the finest traditions in the technique of dancing as a Pavlova, a Karsavina, or a Tchernicheva.

When all the years of training are at an end, and success has been attained, the life of the *danseuse* is one of self-denial and hard work. There is no time for social pleasures. Muscles have to be kept in order with daily practice, fatigue has to be warded off, thought has to be concentrated. Exercises have to be gone through, and rest is needed on the days following a performance. When it is a question of long tours, such as Madame Pavlova is always taking, there is the added exertion required for organization. Every detail is submitted to Pavlova herself by her secretary, M. Dandré. Perhaps there is not another dancer who could stand the strain as she does, but small and lithe as she is, her muscular strength is great.

It is curious how Cecchetti's pupils whom he taught in Russia have come and settled in London as he has

done. Mdlle. Kyasht is married to Colonel Ragosan, and has her house in St. John's Wood; Madame Tchernicheva, who is Madame Gregorieff in private life, also makes her home in London; Madame Karsavina is the wife of Captain Henry Bruce, and though at present with her husband in Sofia, where he is attaché at the Embassy, she had a house in Hill Street for many years; and everybody in Golders Green knows Madame Pavlova's home at the top of the hill. Others have gone to America, France and Italy. Adelina Rossi, whom Cecchetti both taught and danced with at the Empire, married the grandson of Pratese, the hero of the truffle episode in the days when Cecchetti toured with his father in America, and Edea Santori, who presented him with the stick crowned with a shamrock, is married and settled in the United States. Amongst the men dancers who have passed through Cecchetti's hands, M. Fokine is settled in New York, and it was only the other day he created a ballet for the Ziegfeld Follies. M. Nijinsky has been reported dead, but this is not true; his nervous system has entirely given way, and he is being carefully nursed. M. Massine is still before the public in England, and was lately dancing at the Coliseum. Luigi Albertieri, for whom Cecchetti has always cherished so much affection and admiration, has carried the traditional technique of dancing to America, and for a long time he was *premier danseur* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, and put on the ballets there as well. It was only through a fortunate chance that he became a dancer at all. When he was quite young Albertieri travelled all over Spain and Italy, in ballet and opera, in a company made up entirely of children. The little troupe was quite famous, but as its members grew up they were one by one discarded.

When Albertieri became too old to continue with

the children's company, he got various small engagements in Italy. It was as a member of the *corps de ballet* at Turin, in 1883, that Cecchetti first saw him, and seeing that he showed talent, was attracted by him. He noticed that Albertieri and two other young men spent most of their time playing billiards, that, with the exception of performing their duties at the theatre, they never worked. So Cecchetti spoke to them one night.

"Why do you young men waste so much time?" he asked. "Why don't you work?"

"How can we, M. Cecchetti? There is no one to teach us."

"Do you mean that you want to learn?"

"Indeed, yes!"

"Well, you come to the theatre to-morrow morning and see if there is not someone there to give you lessons!"

The three young men arrived the following morning, and there was Cecchetti waiting for them on the stage.

"Now," he said, "place yourselves in the first position and we will go through some exercises."

Albertieri and his two friends looked perplexed.

"Well," Cecchetti inquired, "what is the matter?"

"I am sorry, Maestro, but . . . but we do not know what you mean by the 'first position'?"

"What! you, who have been doing *entrechats* and *ballons*, don't know the first position?"

"We have never been taught."

"Do you mean you don't know what you do?"

"No, Maestro; we have only picked it up by imitating!" For the rest of the season Cecchetti took the three young men in hand and gave them lessons every morning. But it was only a matter of a few weeks, and at the end of that time he was due to go on a tour in Spain with his wife and Madame Limido.

Poor Albertieri was excessively worried to think that his lessons must come to an end, and he persuaded a friend of Cecchetti's to entreat him to give him a place in his company, no matter how small. All the arrangements were completed, but Cecchetti could not resist the pleadings of a young man who was so obviously anxious to learn, so Albertieri went to Spain, and his lessons became serious indeed. For about eight months Cecchetti, realizing that Albertieri knew more about the latter end of the technique of dancing than he did of the beginning, kept him doing exercises at the bar. Once or twice the pupil became restive, and begged that he might go on to something else. At last Cecchetti said : " Very well, now we will make a change ! " Albertieri beamed with delight, but his face fell when he was told that he could now do the same exercise in the centre of the room.

His début has already been described in an earlier part of these memoirs, and it was a similar kindness which gave him the opportunity of dancing Cecchetti's *pas seul* as the Satyr in " Amor " at La Scala. Again it was a case of pleading indisposition, and making Albertieri take his place. Again the audience, not being in the secret, thought it was Cecchetti dancing, though there were those present who noticed that in some of the more intricate steps something was wrong. Either Cecchetti was losing his powers, or it was another dancer. Presently, when some of his friends who had been in front came and saw Cecchetti standing in the wings, they said they knew it was not he who had been dancing, all the same Albertieri was highly praised, and the story of the change was all over Milan the following day.

Cecchetti got an excellent engagement for Albertieri after that at the handsome theatre in Brescia, and from there he went onward and upward. He

replaced Cecchetti at the Empire, and was a great favourite with Madame Katti Lanner, and as the head of a big school of dancing in New York, he is now following in the footsteps of his master. Occasionally his pupils come to London and take the opportunity of learning from Cecchetti himself.

Two more of Cecchetti's pupils in the days gone by were the brothers Marianni, both gifted dancers, but they did not have an extended career. One died young, and the other went mad.

There are many other instances of kindness to fellow-artists and young students which Cecchetti has not thought worth recording. When asked about them he replies a little ruefully: "I think I am unfortunate, because my efforts at helping people have so often resulted in their turning and rending me!"

Often he has taken the place of a less fortunate artist, incapacitated through illness, handing him the salary till he was able to return. There is much talent to which he has devoted himself and scarcely been thanked for his generosity. Such treatment has surprised and distressed him a good deal, for Cecchetti is a true Italian. He habitually expresses what he feels. He acts quickly and impulsively, and he is startled and deeply annoyed when he finds that an injury has been done him. His love for animals is intense, and during the course of these memoirs he has frequently stopped to tell some anecdote of a cat, a horse, or a dog with much more fervour than he bestowed upon the record of his own career. He recalled with delight how he and Madame used to put bread-crumbs for the sparrows on the window-sill at Bologna, and how sometimes, when he was tired and forgot, the birds would come and tap on the window-pane. Then there was a white horse in "Amor," which carried the mighty Barbarossa on his back. Cecchetti, as a

ENRICO CECCHETTI
as Pantaloon in "Carnival"
(his favourite part).

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peasant, brought some sugar for him every night, and carried it in a small leather pouch at his waist. Naturally the horse knew his friend, and when he was on the stage he was continuously turning and nosing Cecchetti. Often, when Madame was in her dressing-room, she would suddenly find the horse's head poking over her shoulder. Cecchetti's love of cats is supreme.

His taste in food is very conservative, for there is no cuisine in his estimation that can surpass that of his own country, and his home in London in this respect is like his home in Italy. Years ago he used to be a tremendous devotee of the cigarette. He smoked quite thirty or forty cigarettes a day, but as he found it was having a bad effect on his health, he broke himself of the habit entirely. As a raconteur of anecdotes it would be difficult to surpass him, for Cecchetti's sense of fun is never absent, and he is such a wonderful actor he elaborates a scene or a personality so that they are brought to life. Often during the writing of these memoirs he has jumped up and given imitations of people he has known with inimitable humour, bringing out every little idiosyncrasy of thought and appearance. Finally, he is a true artist, strong in his beliefs, modest about what concerns himself, honest in his criticisms, and a terrific worker.

* * * * * *

In Cecchetti's London studio the gifts of which the young English dancers are possessed may be seen. Prominent amongst those who make up the most advanced class are Ninette de Valois, very charming and slim, and technically all that can be desired, and Errol Anderson, a young Englishman, graceful, agile, in every way an elegant dancer. Both Ninette de Valois, who is not French, as her name implies, but Irish, and

Errol Anderson are professionals. They have danced in the Russian ballet seasons, so has Molly Lake, another excellent pupil, who was with Madame Karsavina's company and has now gone to Japan and China with Madame Pavlova. Margaret Craske and Ursula Morton are two more pupils who have been in Madame Karsavina's company, the latter now takes part in M. Massine's *ballet divertissements*. The name of Vivienne May, a charming dancer, must not be forgotten in the list of professionals.

At the last prize day, which always ends every season of teaching, the following judges came to award the marks: Madame Pavlova, Madame Lopokova, Madame Tchernicheva, Mdlle. Ninette de Valois, Mdlle. Derra de Mérode, Mdlle. Mimi Rambert, Miss Joan Broady, M. Léonide Massine, M. Serge Grigorieff, M. Leon Woizikovsky. The names of those who gained the highest awards were Noranne Rose, Sophie Stewart, Edna Jackson, Rosamund Garden, Elsie Parsons, Eleonora Phillips, Eileen Thomas. The three babies of the school, Sylvia, Iris and Ada, aged eight and nine years, were also dancing that afternoon, and they claim Cecchetti's very special interest. They are the buds that are just showing, and who knows how beautifully they may blossom!

Which amongst all the students who competed so eagerly that afternoon will develop into the great British *ballerina*, who will set the fashion and the taste as the Russian artists have done? It will be interesting to watch!

In the meantime it must not be forgotten that there is already one English dancer of temperament, Miss Phyllis Bedells, and that Madame Genée and Madame Kyasht have been practically monopolized by the English stage. England has had too, in a sense, her ballet. Though the artists who made the fame of the

ballets at the Alhambra and the Empire were mostly foreign, some of the scenes and subjects were topical; such as "High Jinks," and the "Milliner Duchess," and "Ship Ahoy." Altogether sixty ballets were produced in twenty-seven years at the Empire. There has been the vogue of skirt dancing, and the vogue of Loie Fuller, and the vogue of Maud Allan, and the vogue, ushered in by Pavlova and Mordkin with their startling *pas de deux* "L'Automne Bacchanal," for the Russian dancers. Where is the young English dancer who will lead the way for England?

When Cecchetti first settled in London, a connoisseur of dancing said to him: "There are no English dancers. English girls can't dance; they have no temperament," and Cecchetti replied: "Why not? They have the same limbs, the same bones, the same nerves and sinews as girls of other countries. Let them work, and then we shall see!"

The answer is reassuring, but it does not sum up all the qualities which have gone to make such a dancer as Madame Pavlova. It does not try to explain what it is that makes her the most indescribable, the most illusive, the most enthralling, baffling and lovable being in all that she does on the stage.

When Cecchetti is asked about her he shrugs his shoulders and says: "One cannot explain genius!"

BALLET DANCERS BEFORE CECCHETTI'S DAY

WHEN, where, how, did dancing begin? This is an intricate part of the history of dancing which has been told in detail in various standard works on the subject, and need not be touched upon here. After all, it is personalities that make an art, and in the far distant ages history is but guess work. In India, in Egypt, in Arabia, in Persia, in South Africa, the natives still perform dances of great antiquity, but none of these can be said to have made the ballet. The start seems to date from the time when Catherine de' Medici imported the Italian fashions of elaborate festivities to the court of France to distract the attention of her son, Henri III., from the affairs of state. In Italy the court entertainments were on a lavish scale, and it was from Italy that Catherine de' Medici imported Baltasarini, otherwise known as Beaujoyeaux, a Piedmontese, who was hailed as a genius of choreographic art in his day. It was the Marshal de Brissac who acted as intermediary, and it was on the occasion of the betrothal of the Duc de Joyeuse to Margaret of Lorraine that Baltasarini had the opportunity of proving his worth in France. The "Ballet Comique de la Reine," of which a full account is furnished in the journal of Pierre de l'Estoile, in terms of great enthusiasm, was a mixture of Old Testament story and fable. The performance lasted from ten o'clock in the evening until four the next morning, and fountains, artificial fires and aquatic machines were introduced. Royalties and members of the court took part. From a "machine" drawn by sea horses, accompanied by twelve

tritons and sirens, the Queen descended, and in golden cars there were the Princesse de Lorraine, Duchesse de Mercueil, Duchesses de Guise, de Nevers, de Joyeuse, etc. This was evidently what in modern times is styled "a grand entrance," and it was followed by a ballet in which the story of "Circe" was told with musical interludes and dances. The cost of the sumptuous entertainment was over three and a half million francs.

The fashion having been started, the court of France cultivated dancing with zest. Louis XIII., though a taciturn, sombre figure, interested himself in court ballets and personated the Demon of Fire in "La Délivrance de Renault," and the Duc de Nemours in this reign occupied himself in a choreographic conception, "docile to his rheumatism," which had the title of "A Ballet of the Gouty!"

Up to the reign of Louis XIV., the mixture of *mime* and dancing which could come under the title of ballet was cultivated as an aristocratic relaxation. A tremendous amount of practising was gone through by the gentlemen and ladies of the court, and just as in the days of Queen Elizabeth a person was looked upon askance if unable to walk into a house and immediately take part in the most complicated madrigal, so the French ladies and gentlemen of the days of "Le Roi Soleil" showed their breeding by their execution of the stately minuets, and gavottes, and chaconnes.

It is said that the rules for dancing the minuet would fill a volume alone, but that nobody was ever more keen on performing it correctly than Louis XIV. himself. When, however, he grew fat, dancing at the court declined, and the era of the professional dancer started with the establishment of "L'Académie Nationale de Musique et de la Danse," in 1661. Then it was that the germ of the ballet, which had been

imported from Italy by Baltasarini, gained impetus, first from the music of Lulli, and later from the genius of Jean Georges Noverre, the son of a Swiss soldier of distinction, who was adjutant in the army of Charles XII.

Lulli's origin is obscure. He was brought over from Italy to France, and got an engagement as kitchen boy in the household of the King's sister. The anecdotage of his youth is strewn with questionable escapades. While in the employ of "La Grande Mademoiselle" he wrote numerous scandalous little verses at her expense, and there is a story of how this *gamin* once followed her into the garden and overheard her remark that a certain pedestal needed a statue. "La Grande Mademoiselle" continued her promenade, and when she returned the pedestal was no longer unoccupied. There, on its pinnacle, stood Lulli, divested of all his clothes! As a means of self-advertisement this *coup de théâtre* was excellently planned. "Mademoiselle" was furious, while lesser people covertly laughed. Finally Lulli was removed from her household to that of the King, and from a lowly position he rose to great distinction. There is no need to enlarge here upon his place in music, or the clever way in which he managed to attach himself to people of importance. Lulli dreamed of the union of music and dancing; Noverre's imagination pictured the ballet as we know it to-day, but he was hampered by jealousy and accepted beliefs. Lulli was the first to insist upon women being allowed to dance in the ballet, and to put an end to the foolish practice of allotting female parts to men; Noverre abolished the custom of wearing masks, and he made many reforms in dress and technique.

Up to his time there were rigid rules, which demanded a certain sequence of dances. The gavotte had to be followed by the tambourin, the tambourin by the

minuet. Noverre concentrated all his thoughts on making the dancer express music and emotion.

Here, then, were the two great reformers. Lulli the Italian, and Noverre the Frenchman, the first *maître de ballet!* He made his début at the court of Louis XV., at a fête at Fontainebleau, without marked success. Later he went to Berlin, and became a great favourite of Frederick the Great and his brother, Prince Henry of Prussia. For a time, it is said, he had lessons of Marcel, a noted teacher of the day, a magnificent person who sat in a chair while great ladies and gentlemen, who came to him for instruction, filed before him, curtsying as they passed, putting a certain sum of money in a china jar for a stated charity.

In 1747, Noverre roused much jealousy with his "Ballet Chinois," which he put on at the Opéra Comique while he was *maître de ballet* there. Being a man of much culture, he loved to travel, and he left Paris for twenty years; when he returned he started a campaign against the rules and restrictions which governed the ballet in France. He invented new *enchaînements*, or blending of steps; he showed his loathing for convention; in fact he revolutionized the whole system of ballet dancing. At Stuttgart, where he became *maître de ballet* at the invitation of the Duc de Würtemberg, he wrote his "Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets," which caused a sensation. He put on ballets in Berlin and London, and finally made a huge success in Paris with his tragic ballet "Medea."

For many years he veered between Italy and France. He superintended the fêtes at the court of Naples, he was *maître de danse* to the Empress Maria Theresa, he was called to Lisbon, and to London, where he and Garrick became great friends; Marie Antoinette appointed him *maître des ballets en chef* at the "Académie

Nationale de Musique et de la Danse," he directed the fêtes at the Petit Trianon, and when the revolution broke out emigrated to London.

While Noverre was so busy, both with the technique of the dance and the ballet, there were stars in the ranks of professional dancers who were fast coming above the horizon. There was the wonderful Mdlle. Prévôt, famous for her lightness, her *passe-pieds* and her *mime*. She made a great stir with her dancing and acting in the Duchesse du Maine's version of Corneille's "Horace," and she was the mistress of those two rivals of their day, Sallé and Camargo. The last is a name that even to-day causes a little thrill, for she was not only famous as a *danseuse*, but she set the fashions, she was run after by the aristocracy, she was fêted, cultivated and spoiled, and she added to the technique of the dance. Sallé, her rival, was probably classic and stately. Camargo was light, gay, brilliant. She got on her toes, she is credited with being the first to execute *entrechats* with four rossings, a big achievement in 1730, when it is remen bered that eight is the largest number of crosses that any dancer has made! Sallé put on tights under her Greek robes; Camargo, finding that her skirts impeded her quick steps, shortened them—all very exciting and daring at the time—but now that the ballet skirt is so familiar, it is difficult to realize the sensation which the change made in Camargo's day.

Although Marie Anne de Cupis de Camargo came into the world at a time when her father was excessively poor, she claimed descent from an exalted Roman family which boasted a Bishop, an Archbishop and a Cardinal, while her mother was of noble Spanish origin. The story goes that she was only six months old when she heard her father play the violin and started dancing, a little fallacy which was probably the invention of

her Press agent—if she had one! However, it is known that she made her début in Brussels at the age of eleven, after having studied with her father, who was employed by the Prince de Ligne. When she was sixteen she first appeared in Paris in "Les Caractères de la Danse," and made a triumphant success, just as another famous *danseuse*, Mdlle. Guimar, did in the same ballet over thirty years later.

Paris absolutely lost its head over Camargo at once, so much so that her mistress, Mdlle. Prévôt, became furiously jealous, and started one of those little campaigns of obstruction which seem to belong to all ages. She refused to give Camargo any more lessons, she refused to dance with her, she refused anything and everything that would assist her pupil. But it didn't matter in the least; Camargo, serious and strangely grave in private life, sparkled and smiled at her audiences, young men clustered round her, her shoemaker made his fortune because she had pretty, small feet, her *perruquier* was patronized by the rank and fashion of the day, there were hats *à la Camargo*, fans *à la Camargo*, dresses *à la Camargo*. As far as her face was concerned Camargo was not beautiful, but she was dashing and bold. Once, when Desmoulin, a famous male dancer of the day, failed to make his entrée, she bounded forward lightly and executed his dance in his absence! While she was the pet of Parisian audiences, Sallé was the darling of English audiences in London. Her most striking success was in the classic ballet of "Pygmalion," in which she appeared in Greek draperies over tights, discarding the powdered hair and plumed helmet of the day. Sallé was the daughter of a minor theatre manager, and the niece of another, and she danced with her brother in an English comedy, "Love's Last Shift," which was put on in London by John Rich, the first music-hall manager

and pantomime producer. She was a choreographist as well as a dancer, and created a furore in Paris with "Pygmalion" and "Bacchus et Ariadne." Royalty patronized her, young men fought duels over her, and the public fought to get tickets for the occasions when she danced.

Sallé was followed by Marie Allard, who was opposed to Sallé in her style of dancing, as she was more a *comédienne*. She charmed with her gaiety and grace, and she is credited with being the first *danseuse* who was allowed to arrange her own *entrées*. But though a pupil of the elder Vestris, who was also her lover, her career was not long, as she got too fat to dance.

Her master was the greatest dancer of his day. Gaetan Appolino Balthazar Vestris, born in Florence in 1729, and pupil of the noted Dupré, who had been taught by Beauchamps, the moving spirit in establishing Louis XIV.'s "Académie de Musique et de la Danse"—practically the opera and ballet of the period.

Vestris was a little man, but he had a great opinion of his own gifts, and he modestly called himself "Dieu de la danse!"

He and Noverre had the same ideals of ballet dancing, and together they worked out many reforms. Clever, indeed a genius as a dancer, Vestris was in other ways no match for Noverre in culture. He adored grandiloquent speeches, and he is credited with numerous conceited sayings which to-day would have brought upon him the American denunciation of being a "hot-air artist." When Gluck refused to write a chaconne for Vestris' son Auguste, in "Iphigénie en Aulis," on the plea that the Greeks knew nothing whatever of such a dance, Vestris replied: "Did they not? I'm sorry for them. But you must write a chaconne for my son, because I am 'le Dieu de la danse'!" Gluck, excessively

irritated, replied: "Well, if you are the 'Dieu de la danse,' then go and dance in heaven, and not in my opera!" In spite of this preliminary ruffle, the chaconne was written. Once, when a stout lady in the street trod on Vestris' foot, he replied to her profuse apologies: "Hurt me, madam? Me? You have nearly plunged Paris into mourning for a fortnight!"

Vestris always expressed the opinion that his century had produced three really eminent men: Frederick the Great, Voltaire and himself! His pride in his son Auguste, who was the outcome of a liaison with Mdlle. Allard, was colossal, and seeing that Auguste surpassed his father as a dancer, he may be pardoned for saying: "If my Auguste occasionally descends to touch the earth, it is merely out of consideration for the feelings of less talented colleagues!" When Auguste practically replaced his father, Vestris transferred the title of "Dieu de la danse" to him, saying that he had inherited his gifts so it was right he should also have his designation. Auguste not only possessed his father's gifts as a dancer, but he was also heir to his inordinate conceit and bombast. Once, when M. de Vismes, the Director of the Opera, got angry with Auguste for some impertinence, he inquired: "M. Vestris, do you know to whom you are speaking?" Vestris, quite undaunted, replied: "Yes, to the farmer of my talent!"

Another time, when one of those little revolutions which arise out of nerves and excitement in the *coulisses* of a theatre happened at the Paris Opera House, Auguste, as one of the leading spirits, was ordered to Fort l'Evêque. The parting between father and son was one of grand tragedy and tears. The elder Vestris with a fine gesture advised his beloved Auguste.

"Go, my son! This is the most glorious moment of your career. Take my carriage, and ask for the cell

which was occupied by my friend the King of Poland. I will meet every expense. This is the first time in history that there has ever been any difference of opinion between the House of Bourbon and the House of Vestris ! ”

Both the Vestris came to London, where they were as greatly successful as they were in Paris. They danced at the King's Theatre and received nineteen hundred pounds for a two months' season. It was Gaetan Vestris who laid down the classic rules for dancing the gavotte, so perfectly balanced, so finely thought, that they are one of the traditions of dancing, and he and Maximillian Gardel are said to be the inventors of the pirouette, cultivated later to an extent that is hardly believable. The pirouette of Vestris' day would doubtless cause a smile if seen by a small member of Cecchetti's class now, but at the time it was a sensational addition to the technique of dancing.

When Camargo and Sallé and the Vestris had come and gone, the way was clear for new dancers ; the public was ready for fresh outbursts of praise. The idol which replaced those who had lived their hours of glorification was “ Guimard la Grande ; ” Guimard the magnificent mistress of the notorious Prince de Soubise ; Guimard whom Marie Antoinette is said to have consulted on all matters that had to do with dress ; Guimard who had only to express a wish to have it acceded to ; Guimard who lived in a superb residence at Pantin near Paris, who looked at the paintings of Fragonard on her walls, and who staged risky comedies at her own private theatre ; Guimard who had a town house of equal magnificence and another private theatre in the Chaussée d'Antin, which would seat five hundred people, also decorated by Fragonard and David, and called the Temple of Terpsichore ; Guimard who counted amongst her adorers the Bishop of Orleans, the Bishop

of Choiseul, the Archbishop of Cambrai and Desnos, the Bishop of Verdun, wealthy aristocrats, musicians and poets; Guimard who helped all her friends and relatives; Guimard who finally married the man who had always loved her, Jean Despréaux, and settled with him in Montmartre quite happily on a small income.

Guimard was altogether a decorative personality in the decorative period which preceded the Revolution. Strictly speaking, she was not beautiful. Her enemies said she was ugly. It was her brilliancy, her *chic*, the expressiveness of her eyes, the slimness of her figure, the charm of manner and gesture and her gifts as a dancer that cast a glamour round her. In her personality she had more of Camargo than Sallé, and like Camargo, she also made her début as Terpsichore in "Les Caractères de la Danse" at the Opera. At the age of sixteen she had previously made a first appearance at the Comédie Française, and from then onward she had no rival. Noverre said of her that "from her début to her retirement, she was graceful, naturally so. She never ran after difficulties. A lovable and noble simplicity reigned in her dance; she designed it with perfect taste, and put expression and sentiment into her movements." It was to Guimard that the painter David owed his start in life. As a poor art student without means, he was reduced to house-painting for a living. Guimard, who although not a paragon of virtue, was large-hearted and generous, secured a pension for David which permitted him to go and study in Rome. Her influence at Court and amongst the *noblesse* was constantly used on behalf of her friends, and as she counted so many Princes of the Church in her list of admirers, she was able to influence the disposal of many livings. She entertained lavishly, and once made a startling appearance at Longchamps races in

a carriage which bore an armorial design of a gold mask decorated with mistletoe, supported by the Graces, and crowned by a group of Cupids. At her house in the Chaussée d'Antin in Paris she gave three receptions a week : first, to the aristocracy of the Court ; second, the artists, actors and musicians of the city ; third, the aristocratic *bons vivants* and *roués !*

Just as Paris had worked itself into a fever heat of admiration over Guimard's predecessors, so it flared up into an ecstasy of approval over Guimard herself. The country might be falling to pieces, but her will was law, and if anything happened to her the public was stricken with anxiety. Once she broke her arm through a portion of the scenery falling on her. A mass was immediately said at Notre Dame for her recovery. The Prince de Soubise desired to present her with some jewellery, but Guimard refused it, and put another touch of popularity to the affection which was so bounteously bestowed upon her by asking that she might have the money instead and, with an additional sum from her own pocket, give it to the poor. When the Prince de Soubise crippled his own finances to assist his bankrupt son-in-law, the Prince de Guéméné, Guimard and all the artists at the opera house renounced the pensions which Soubise had made them, and which she had in most cases been instrumental in obtaining.

Impresarios in England at that time found it very difficult to inveigle the noted French dancers to come to London. As a rule they waited until they were past their prime, but as the public rarely knew, or knows, the truth about any artist, the dancers who were induced to cross the Channel generally deducted ten or twenty years from their real age on the journey. Thus, when Guimard left Paris, aged forty, she arrived in London aged thirty-five, but her powers were as great as they had ever been. In England she was as much a success,

both on the stage and off, as she had been in Paris. In a letter which she wrote to the Baron de Ferté, at that time Director of the Opera House, in Paris, she excuses herself for not having answered him sooner, because she could not get a moment to herself. "Les plus grandes dames" were continually with her, and, above all others, there was the Duchess of Devonshire, with whom she struck up a great friendship. Speaking of the public she wrote: "*Ils m'aiment à la folie, ces bons Anglais!*" When she returned to Paris, her face was a good deal disfigured with the marks of smallpox, and she was approaching the time when she contemplated retiring. She disposed of her house in the Chaussée d'Antin by lottery. There were 2,500 tickets at 120 livres each, for which there was a great demand. The drawing took place in the Hôtel des Menus-Plaisirs, Rue de Bergère, on May 1st, 1786. The Comtesse de Lau drew the winning number.

The clouds of revolution, which finally burst with such sudden violence, affected Guimard as it affected everybody. She lost her entire fortune. Gardel, who had followed the younger Vestris at the Opera, tried to keep the ballet alive by putting on the story of the Marseillaise, but as people were dancing to its tune in the streets, they did not want to see it on the stage. Immediately after the Terror eighteen hundred dance halls are said to have been opened in Paris. Guimard lived through all the horrors, and being reduced to great straits, had to beg of her old friends to use their influence on her behalf. Her husband Despréaux, with whom she used to dance, was made inspector of theatres, and through her appeals rose to the position of inspector-general of Court entertainments in the reign of Louis XVIII., and "*professeur de danse et de grâces*" at the Conservatoire. Guimard died at the age of seventy-three, and her husband only survived her four years.

During Guimard's life the opera house in Paris, which had been the scene of so many of her triumphs, was burned to the ground in 1781. The fire took place during a performance, and it was only owing to the presence of mind of D'Auberval that the audience was able to escape. On the discovery of the flames and smoke, he immediately had the curtain lowered, but several of the dancers were burnt. Guimard herself was discovered in a box, clad in her underclothing, and saved by one of the stage hands. D'Auberval was a dancer of much repute, and he is now remembered by the ballet of "La Fille mal gardée," which was done in Petrograd, the music brought up to date by Drigo, and the part of the mother taken by Cecchetti.

After the fire, a home for the ballet was made at the Porte St. Martin. In the days of Louis XIV., the opera was known as "L'Académie Royale de Musique et de la Danse." When Louis XVI. fled to Varennes, it became simply the Opera. When he returned it was again "L'Académie," a month later it became "Opéra National," later "Théâtre des Arts," and this title was followed by "Théâtre de la République et des Arts."

The men dancers of Guimard's day were numerous and many were famous. Louis Pierre Dupré, who also rejoiced in the distinction of "*Le Grand*," had retired before her début, but he was followed by a whole line of distinguished dancers. There were the two brothers Gardel, Pierre and Maximilien. Maximilien Gardel taught the great Carlo Blasis, and thought so highly of the young Italian dancer that he selected him to be Guimard's partner in "La Chercheuse d'Esprit." Blasis became the greatest dancer and teacher of his day, and his pupil, Giovanni Lepri, taught Cecchetti and Madame Cecchetti, Virginia Zucchi, and a host of the best dancers of the 'seventies

and the 'eighties. In the opinion of Castil-Blaze, the brothers Gardel "effected in dancing the same revolution as Gluck and Sacchini achieved in later years in French music."

Guimard was still alive when two of the most famous *danseuses* of the last century came into the world—Maria Taglioni and her rival, Fanny Elssler. Ten years later, in 1821, the galaxy of genius was further strengthened by the birth of Carlotta Grisi, Lucille Grahn, Fanny Cerito, all in the same year. Three out of the five dancers were Italian: Taglioni, Grisi and Cerito; Elssler was Austrian, and Grahn, Danish. They showed how the art of the ballet was being cultivated in Europe, and lived through the golden period of ballet in England. If France had her *Académie de Danse*, so had Italy, and they both held to their creeds of choreographic purity. Russia, Austria and Denmark also boasted their national schools of dancing.

With the arrival of Maria Taglioni and Fanny Elssler, the public of the world was introduced to years of competition that brought fervent partisanship and intense sympathy. No two dancers could have been more opposed in their personal appearance or their art. Taglioni, whose father was Italian and whose mother was a Swede, Anna Karsten, granddaughter of a famous actor and singer, was unkindly treated by Nature at the outset. As a child she was unprepossessing. She was said to have physical defects. Her back was so round that a professor of dancing whom Taglioni *père* consulted said: "What can I do with that little hunchback?" Her features were too large, her nose heavy, her arms were too long, her jaw was too square. Fanny Elssler, whose father was Haydn's copyist, on the contrary, was beautiful in every respect. She was tall and strong. Her limbs

were exquisitely made. Her small classic head was placed on her shoulders in a singularly elegant manner. Her skin was pure and white, her eyes beamed with mischief. She had a well-formed mouth; at the corners there lingered, sometimes, an ironical smile. She had quantities of bright chestnut hair, and she was slim and feminine.

Contrast in appearance was not the only difference between the rivals. Taglioni's style of dancing was utterly unlike that of Elssler. Her whole ideal was poetic. It was ethereal and graceful. She was always studying the best way to make an effect of lightness and swiftness. As a dancer she seemed a creature of innocence, a spirit untouched by earthly experience. When Victor Hugo once sent her a book, he wrote the following inscription: "A vos pieds—à vos ailes!"

Fanny Elssler had none of these qualities in her dancing. Her face had a beauty which captivated an audience the moment she appeared on the stage, and her range of expression was more human and virile. Elssler was material, Taglioni spiritual.

Taglioni achieved her success by art alone. Two of her aunts were dancers of much repute, her father was a gifted *maître de ballet.* He was a severe master, but it was through his training that Maria's figure became strong and normal. He taught her the traditions of strictly classical technique, which was really the foundation upon which Maria Taglioni built her delicate fancies. Katti Lanner, who danced with Elssler and Cerito, has described Taglioni as a fairy being, always about to soar away from the earth. Taglioni's father prided himself on the illusion of lightness which was one of his daughter's greatest attributes, and which she obtained through strict, untiring work. When she was in London, Taglioni had a slanting stage built in her lodgings, so that she would be quite sure of her

balance when she danced at the theatre. The story goes that the floor underneath was occupied by a stranger, who imagined that Taglioni was forgoing her exercises on his account. So word was sent up that she must not stop dancing. The noise would not disturb him at all! Taglioni *père* replied: "Tell the gentleman that I, her father, have never yet heard my daughter's step—if ever that should happen I would have no more to do with her."

Taglioni made her début in Vienna, at the age of eighteen, in a ballet called "*Réception d'une jeune fille à la cour de Terpsichore.*" Her father had arranged a *pas seul* for her, but when Maria got on the stage she was nervous and confused. She forgot all about her father's *pas seul*, and substituted one of her own invention, which was apparently quite as good, for she was highly successful. From there she went on to Stuttgart, where she danced at the State Opera House. The public loved her, and her fellow artists held her in such great affection that they wept when the time came for her last appearance. At Munich she had more triumphs; she was received by the Royal family, and everybody made a great fuss over her.

Taglioni was twenty-three when she at last went to Paris. Both father and daughter combined artistic fervour with a strong sense of business. They knew that no artist was really established until the fullest approval was gained in the French capital. It was not an easy task, for at that time the competition to gain the *cachet* of Parisian audiences was great. The taste was critical, and had been fed by the appearances of gifted dancers of every nationality from the time of Louis XIV. The same spirit of conquest applied to London a few years later, but in 1827 success in Paris meant a reputation which penetrated Europe. Taglioni was not immediately received with the fullest

approval that had been bestowed upon her elsewhere, but she persisted. She returned the following season, and finally she was engaged for a term of fifteen years. In "La Vestale" she was happily suited, and one of her greatest and lasting triumphs was in "La Sylphide," which to this day is associated with her name.

This ballet was adapted from Charles Nodier's story "Trilby," and set to music by Schneitzhöffer. It told of the story of a sylph and a handsome Highland peasant who, sleeping and waking, was haunted by her beauty. He is betrothed to a young girl who is heart-broken by his indifference, and he himself goes mad. The sylph becomes the victim of a terrible spell cast on her by infernal powers during the witches' sabbath. This scene was said to be extraordinarily impressive, and it gave Taglioni an opportunity of showing those strange ethereal qualities which her generation raved about.

While Taglioni was gaining her world-wide reputation, the four other *danseuses* who were to compete with her later were beginning their careers. Fanny Elssler, with her sister Thérèse, who was two years older, had been acquiring a reputation in Germany. Thérèse was less brilliant than Fanny, but she is said to have had a charming personality and delightful manners. She ended her days as the morganatic wife of Prince Adalbert of Prussia. Fanny was credited with having Napoleon's son, L'Aiglon, Duc de Reichstadt, for her lover, but it has been thought that this was only a rumour set about by her manager as a sensational advertisement. Both the girls had the interest of Haydn, for whom Fanny Elssler's father copied his compositions.

Carlotta Grisi, who had come into the world at a palace at Visnida, in Upper Istria, had been dancing with other children at La Scala, in Milan, at the age

of five, and had been nicknamed " La Petite Herberlé," after a popular actress of the day. She had later toured in Italy, going to Rome, Naples and Florence ; she also went to Vienna.

Lucille Grahn had made her début as Cupid at the age of four, then at fourteen she had danced in the opera " La Muette de Portici," and later in a ballet of her own, " Le Cinque Seul."

Fanny Cerito, who became the special pet of London audiences, and the adoration of our grandfathers, who wafted a kiss into the air from the tips of their fingers when they spoke of her as the " divine Fanny," had made her début at the San Carlo, in Naples, in a ballet called " Le Horoscope." She was worshipped by her old father, to whom she was " La Divinità." He tenderly preserved her old dancing shoes, and odds and ends of bouquets, carrying them about in his pockets. Taglioni had had eleven years' start of her fellow dancers, and when Fanny Elssler first went to London, in 1834, Taglioni was well-established. Elssler was then twenty-four. She had made quite a reputation for herself in Germany, but her success in London, on her first visit, was only moderate. However, M. Vernon, who was then manager at the Paris opera, saw her dance, and he offered Fanny and her sister an engagement with a salary of twenty thousand francs each. The contract had not been signed, when he thought he would bring matters to a head by organizing a dinner in honour of the two Elsslers. The entertainment was on a lavish scale, and took place at the "Clarendon," in Bond Street. The guests included people of social distinction, the wine was excellent, the food perfection. When the dessert arrived, a silver salver was brought round, on which were laid many costly presents. There were jewels, pearls, diamonds and rubies. But the Elsslers refused to take anything

valuable, nor did they drink anything but water. Fanny accepted a hat pin, and Thérèse a little hand-bag. The contract still hung about, and was not signed till the very last day, when Vernon had to return to Paris.

The night that Fanny Elssler made her début in Paris marked the starting-point of the rivalry between herself and Taglioni, which the whole world watched and which divided people into different camps of admiration. There were pro-Elsslers and anti-Elsslers, there were pro-Taglionis and anti-Taglionis, and Taglioni must have suffered terribly when she saw how easily her rival conquered. On the first night of her appearance she was immediately acclaimed, and poor Taglioni, who was present in one of the boxes, wept silently. Elssler's fire and dash came as a surprise. She was a favourite at once. Taglioni felt she had been imported to undermine her, and thus the competition seemed more bitter. It was in the dances of Spain that Elssler excelled. She delighted in the art of astonishing, and her greatest success was obtained with the Cachucha. Elssler and the Cachucha and Taglioni and "La Sylphide" were indelibly associated, and separate portions of the public were ready and willing to adore them for the different qualities which they showed.

Had this been the highest point of antagonism, it would have probably ended in nothing more than divided opinion. But Fanny Elssler was not satisfied. She wanted to show that she could compete with Taglioni on her own ground. When she announced her intention of appearing in "La Sylphide" she shocked even her most devoted admirers. This was open war, not artistic rivalry. Even on the grounds of strategy it was ill-advised. However, Elssler had made up her mind, and she did appear in "La Sylphide,"

and it has been said that not even her most enthusiastic supporters could pronounce it anything else than a failure. The ethereal fancy of Taglioni was something that Elssler could not touch, and she had to retire vanquished. It was probably out of pique at her fiasco that Elssler accepted an engagement to go to America; whether this was true or not, her success in the United States was highly sensational. In some towns there were triumphal arches. The compliment of taking the horses out of her carriage and replacing them with a human team was paid her. Sometimes the streets were carpeted for her, and flowers were strewn where she set her feet. During the two years she remained in America she took every town by storm. Every class of society hailed her with delight; even the negroes made a song about her. When she was leaving New Orleans the negro freight-carriers sang as the steamer left the docks:

"Fanny, is you gwine up de ribber?
Grog time o' day.
When all dese here's got Elssler fever?
Oh, hoist away!
De Lor' knows what we'll do widout you!
Grog time o' day.
De toe an' heel won't dance widout you!
Oh, hoist away!
Dey say you dances like a fedder!
Grog time o' day.
Wid t'ree t'ousand dollars all togedder!
Oh, hoist away!"

Elssler frequently danced in Rome when it was under Papal government, and when some aristocratic enthusiasts wanted to present her with a jewelled diadem, Pio Nono was appealed to for consent. With his usual good-humour, he said "Yes"; adding that he had always thought that crowns were designed for "heads," and not for "legs"! When she was dancing in Naples in 1849, Elssler was drawn into one of those patriotic demonstrations which frequently

occurred in the Italian theatres at that date. Austria was just then in power, and the Austrian Government, anxious to smooth over a certain crisis and divert the public mind from revolutionary sentiment, arranged that the *corps de ballet* should wear certain medals which had recently been struck.

In the first act they were worn, but suddenly Elssler got an idea that in some way the medals were meant as a covert insult aimed at her as an Austrian. She refused to go on the stage till they were removed. On the second appearance of the *corps de ballet*, the absence of the medals, which had been discarded at Fanny Elssler's request, caused a commotion, and when the news went round that it was she who had insisted on the change she faced an audience which hissed and hooted her. It was no longer the case of a public witnessing the art of a noted *danseuse*, but of a crowd of people resenting what was interpreted as the arrogant assertion of a foreign government. Fanny Elssler fainted. Not all her personal beauty or the power of her dancing could overcome such fully expressed disapproval! It was the end of her career!

Taglioni, like Elssler, danced in every city in Europe. She was a special favourite in Petrograd, where she remained for three years, held there by the entreaties of the Emperor and Empress, and the fashion she set of wearing long ballet skirts of silk-muslin, nearly reaching her ankles, lasted long after her departure. It was even in vogue when Cecchetti took up his duties at the Marynski in 1887, and La Zucchi calmly put an end to the custom with the aid of a pair of scissors! As Taglioni's feet could not be seen from the Imperial box, the Emperor Alexander II. is said to have left his accustomed place and taken a seat in the stalls. When she was in London, a male member of the audience asked Taglioni if she could

not modify her costume so as to show more of her figure.

"Are you married, sir?" Taglioni inquired.

He said he was.

"Well," she replied, "I do not dance for you, but for your wife and daughters."

No wonder she was such a favourite with early Victorian audiences; no wonder Thackeray, in "Pendennis," wrote: "Will the young folk ever see anything so charming, anything so classic, anything like Taglioni?"

Théophile Gautier, who was always rushing into print with enthusiastic descriptions of dancers, portrayed Fanny Elssler in the Cachucha in the following glowing words: "Now she darts forward, the castanettes commence their ceaseless clatter; with her hands she seems to shake down clusters of rhythm. How she twists! How she bends! What fire! What voluptuousness! What eager zest! Her arms seem to swoon, her head droops, her body curves backwards until her white shoulders almost touch the ground! What charming gesture! And with that hand which sweeps over the dazzle of the footlights, would not one say that she gathered all the desires and all the enthusiasms of those who watched her?"

Chorley, the dear old stately critic of Victorian days, considered that Elssler's "exquisite management of her bust and arms set her apart from everyone whom he had ever seen, before or after her time."

As Taglioni had set the pace in Paris, it was only natural that she should also set the pace in London. From 1780 to 1830 the art of the ballet had become stereotyped and inexpressive all over the world; but wherever she went, Taglioni inspired it with poetry and idealism. When she made her début in "La Sylphide," in Paris, in 1832, Gautier wrote: "A new

era of choreography has been started by this ballet, and it is through her (Taglioni) that romance has been introduced into the domain of Terpsichore ! "

Throughout her career, Taglioni had been quite as much fêted as Elssler. When she left Petrograd she came away with handsome gifts from the Emperor and Empress and her numberless admirers. At Vienna she was recalled twenty-two times before the curtain, and her carriage was drawn to her hotel by forty young men belonging to the aristocracy of Austria.

She arrived in London in 1830, two years before she had created " La Sylphide," and made her début at the benefit of Laporte, the historic manager of Her Majesty's Theatre, in Didelot's " Flor et Zephire." It was Didelot who was also the author of " La Vestale," in which she was so well suited, and it was Didelot who started the modern period of the Imperial School of Ballet in Petrograd in 1802. Didelot's name is never forgotten there, as it was he who left a special legacy to provide three girls and three boys with education at the school. It was for such ballets as he and his contemporaries wrote that a number of elderly dancers were kept at the Imperial Theatre in Petrograd, so as to verbally hand down the traditional manner of performance.

After her first appearance in London, Taglioni came repeatedly. She became a great favourite of Queen Victoria, who as a child dressed her dolls in several of Taglioni's characters. They are now in the London Museum. She opened the way for those three other *danseuses* who were like her attendant satellites : Grisi, Grahn and Cerito.

They ushered in the " glorious 'forties " of the ballet ; the " glorious 'forties " of social amelioration, when Lord Shaftesbury brought in a bill for regulating

labour, and reduced working hours to ten; the "glorious 'forties" of wit and conversation, when Disraeli was talking, and dressing, his way to fame, and Gladstone was starting his parliamentary career; when the Chartist riots upset the whole of Europe, and Louis XVIII. came post haste from France to England; when people ate and drank a great deal, and the "Ingoldsby Legends" made everybody creep agreeably! The cult of the opera was soon to come, but its advent was held at bay until the five *primi ballerini* of the period had given the best of their youth and art. All could claim a European reputation before they arrived, and both Grahn and Cerito appeared in Taglioni's *chef d'œuvre*, "La Sylphide," within two years of one another.

Grisi had the good fortune to make herself famous in the ballet of "Giselle," in which she created as much sensation as Taglioni had done with "La Sylphide" and Elssler in the Cachucha. In one sense Grisi was fortunate in having a husband who was also a talented *maître de ballet* to arrange "Giselle" for her, and it was also to her benefit that she kept the ballet to herself. It was not danced in her time by other dancers, as Taglioni's successes were. Perhaps the day will come when it will be possible to absolutely write down the movements of a ballet, so that it can be put on fifty years hence with the same ease as it was at the outset. The Italian ballet masters in the 'forties carefully recorded ballets in the typography known to them all. At this date ballet is such an eclectic art, much depends upon the memory of the man who revives a success which is but a few years old! The various choreographic methods of writing ballets have been so little employed that they have only been understood by a few in their generation; they certainly won't be understood in the next.

As Perrot was both a clever dancer and *maître de ballet*, he doubtless kept guard over "Giselle" for his wife, whom he married when she was quite a young girl. Grisi's original idea was to become a singer, like her two cousins Giuditta and Giulia. At one time she showed so much promise that Malibran advised her to devote herself to the training of her voice. Then she met Perrot, who was looking for a chance to reinstate himself at the Paris Opera, from which he had been dismissed. He saw that Carlotta Grisi showed uncommon gifts as a dancer as well as a singer, and at the outset he suggested that she should develop both her gifts. But as the two arts can never grow in one person—the voice suffers through dancing—and Perrot was not above intriguing on his own account and using Grisi's gifts as a lever for himself, the career of a singer was renounced. She appeared once at the Théâtre de la Renaissance in Paris, both as singer and dancer, in "Le Zingaro," in February, 1841, and she went straight from there to the Opera and made an instant success in "La Favorita." But Perrot, who has been spoken of as extremely ugly and bad tempered, nevertheless became her husband, and in June of the same year he arranged for the production of "Giselle," which had the collaboration of Gautier, Heine and Adolf Adam. Grisi made such a sensation with her marvellous dance of death and resurrection as a fairy spirit that the whole of Europe and England rang with her praises. Her success in London was as great as Taglioni's, and when she made her farewell at Drury Lane in 1843, and the public saw her for the last time of that season in that ecstatic leap into her lover's arms in "The Peri," there was a furore. From the stage she was compelled to make a little speech of thanks, and after the performance the notorious Mr. Bunn, manager of Drury Lane, gave a supper in the grand saloon of the theatre to seventy

guests and presented Grisi with a bracelet of black enamel set with diamonds. She went to fulfil further engagements on the Continent after that, and did not return until two years later, when the famous *pas de quatre* brought four great *danseuses* of the period on the stage at the same time. The charm of Grisi's dancing seems to have been associated with her own personality. She was delicately coloured, her hair was fair, her eyes were blue. She was of medium height. Her figure was slight and symmetrical, with none of the anatomical thinness common to the dancers who issued from the Académie in Paris. It was said that she only used rouge to revive the colour of her dancing shoes. Childish naïveté of expression and fresh gaiety were the characteristics of her general appearance.

Lucille Grahn, who is said to have resembled Taglioni as a dancer more than any of her contemporaries, was nevertheless heavier in build. She was tall and slim, with fair hair and blue eyes. She studied in Paris under Barrez, and made her début at the Opera in "Le Carnaval de Venise" in 1838, and in the following year achieved much success in "La Sylphide." The third year of her career at the Paris Opera was interrupted by a fall while rehearsing, which brought on inflammation of the knee, and laid her up for some time. She never appeared there again.

In 1845, Grahn made her greatest success in "Eoline" at Her Majesty's, and also in "Katarina, la Fille du Bandit," written by Grisi's husband, Perrot, to music by Pugni, and often put on by Cecchetti's father in Italy. It was the first ballet that Cecchetti himself was asked to mount when he was appointed *second maître de ballet* at the Imperial Theatre, Petrograd.

Lucille Grahn continued to appear in London till the ballet lost its attraction, and so did Fanny Cerito,

who made some of her most noted successes in "Le Lac des Fées," in which she made her début in 1841, also in "La Sylphide," which was specially revived for her, and above all in her famous *pas de l'ombre* in "Undine," which might be coupled with the shadow song in "Dinorah," with which Adelina Patti charmed audiences twenty years later.

It was in the following years that a glimpse of the awakening craze for Italian opera and singers began to show itself. Persiani had been announced to sing, but owing to illness was unable to appear. The public did not know till the last moment, and there was a feeling that it had been hoaxed. Instead of the opera and Persiani, the management put on the ballet "Alma" with Cerito. Ill-humour characterized the attitude of the audience, and from ill-humour it passed on to loudly expressed dissatisfaction and uproar. It was only quelled when the dancer who was the pet of London made her appearance. In appearance Cerito was short of stature and round in face. Her features were rather heavy in repose, and to a certain extent she resembled Taglioni, because she showed how acquired grace could overcome the lack of personal elegance. She married Saint Leone, the violinist, who turned his attention to dancing, and invented the only choreography which has been thought to have any practical value up to now.

The managerial *coup de maître* which brought the four great dancers together to appear in a *pas de quatre* was made in 1845. Grisi was in Paris; Taglioni, Cerito and Grahn conveniently in London. Perrot was the *maître de ballet* upon whom devolved the duties of dealing with four *danseuses* of world-wide repute. His position was not enviable. It was necessary that the *divertissement* should be so arranged that the special qualities of each dancer should be well placed. Each

had to shine, each had to be equal to the other, there was no first or last. It is possible to imagine a modern *pas de quatre* on these lines with Pavlova, Karsavina, Lopokova and Tchernicheva! Taglioni was by rights the queen of the quartet, but it was a delicate matter for the *maître de ballet* to insist that she should take that place. When, after calculating the usual rate of travelling of the period, it was found that Grisi would not arrive in time to rehearse, and perhaps not to appear at all, the managerial brains were immediately set to work. A vessel was chartered from the Steam Navigation Company for the sole purpose of bringing Grisi to England. A special train was awaiting her arrival at Dover, and relays of horses were in readiness to drag her from Paris to Calais.

At length she arrived, and it was thought that all difficulties were over, when Perrot rushed into the manager's office in despair. He announced that the *pas de quatre* had fallen through after all! It could not be danced! Why? What? How?

The place of honour which had been selected, in the manner of royal processions, to come at the last had been assigned to Taglioni. That was as it should be, but the remaining three *danseuses:* Grisi, Cerito and Grahn; who should say which should come before the other? They had all been born the same year. It was a question of months.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Perrot, "Cerito will not begin before Carlotta, nor Carlotta before Cerito; there is no way to make them stir—all is finished!"

"Oh," said the manager, "the solution is easy. Let the *oldest* take her unquestionable right to the envied position."

Perrot, with a relieved smile, went back to the stage and put forward the proposition, with the result that they drew back more than ever, and were as disinclined

to accept their rights as they had before been eager to claim them.

However, matters were finally adjusted, and the *pas de quatre* created as much sensation as some great event in history. Queen Victoria was present, everybody who was anybody crowded into the theatre, and foreign courts received accounts of it in official dispatches.

This was one of the closing events of the great days of ballet in England. Three years later Taglioni, Cerito and Grahn danced the *pas de déesses* in "Le Jugement de Paris," and it was then that Lucille Grahn introduced a new *pas* which was a species of *valse renversée* on a grand scale.

Grisi left the stage at the highest point of her success and retired to Switzerland, where she died. After a few years of marriage she separated from her husband. Cerito went on dancing in London till 1854, and then retired; and Grahn left the stage six years earlier, and lived to the age of eighty-six.

Taglioni ended her marvellous career in poverty at Marseilles at the age of eighty. She and her father had always kept a strict eye on the business side of art, and when she danced in London she not only received a hundred pounds a night, but also insisted that several of her relations should be financially insured. All her large fortune was lost in a disastrous speculation, and she was reduced to teaching deportment at schools. She was often seen in Hyde Park, with a number of children, a tall gaunt old woman, whose claims to greatness vanished when Jenny Lind came and drew all the attention of the public to herself.

Fanny Elssler, who had played such an important part in Taglioni's career, curiously enough died the same year as her rival. After her fiasco in Italy she retired, and in 1851 married a rich banker.

That was the end of the shining period of ballet in London. Interest became centred in a new idol, Jenny Lind, and no one spoke any more of the ballet or desired to see it. Carlo Blasis had returned to Italy, and there inspired the ballet and the technique of the dancers. For many years all that was renowned in the art came from Italy.

But in England the ballet was dead for over thirty years. Nothing much happened until Manzotti's ballet "Excelsior" was brought to Her Majesty's in 1885, when Cecchetti paid his first visit to London. Then came the Alhambra and Empire ballets, and after another twenty years or so the vogue of Russian ballet began to make its appearance. What will be the next phase ?

Translated from the French.

AFTER THE BALL

A Ballet in Three Tableaux,

by

ENRICO CECCHETTI.

Music by

ERNESTO KÖHLER

CHARACTERS

The Marquis de la Roche..Mayor of the village.
The Marquise.....His wife.
The Captain .....In command of the company.
The Sergeant .....Of the regiment.
Pierrot .....A peasant.
Line .....His peasant fiancée.

Peasants, soldiers, maskers, etc.

The scene takes place in a village in France during the eighteenth century.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE TABLEAUX

1*st Tableau* :—The village square *en fête*.

DANCES.

(*a*) Opening—(*Pas d'ensemble*).
(*b*) The declaration of love—(*Pas de deux*).
(*c*) The rivals—(*Pas de trois*).
(*d*) The upset—(*Danse d'ensemble*).

2*nd Tableau* :—A room in the château of the Marquis.

DANCES:

(*a*) Gavotte—(*Pas de deux*).
(*b*) Menuet—(*Quadrille à quatre couples*).
(*c*) Dance of the flower-sellers—(*Pas de huit*).
(*d*) *Passe-pied*—
(*e*) *Pas d'action*—
(*f*) *Variations*—
(*g*) *Entrain*— } (*Danses d'ensembles*).

3*rd Tableau* :—The park of the château—The duel.

FIRST TABLEAU

The scene is laid in a little village. At the back, on one side is the château of the Marquis, on the other the church. On each side in the foreground there are houses.

It is a *jour de fête ;* several girls and young men, peasants of the village, have assembled in the square for amusement and also to await the arrival of the soldiers.

Pierrot comes to Line, and, thinking that her show of excessive gaiety and indifference is a sign that she does not care for him, imagines she is forgetting him, and is much distressed.

Line, however, assures him that her love is constant and sincere, only that she likes to amuse herself and she detests men who are jealous and grumbling.

Pierrot answers that his sadness is caused by the thought that he must soon leave her. He must serve his time as a soldier, and he fears that during his absence she will find another lover.

Line, after swearing fidelity, mingles with the other peasants to find amusement.

The old Marquis, who is the Mayor of the village, comes out of his palace.

The peasants salute him with respect.

He informs those present that the soldiers are soon arriving, and asks the peasants to make all the necessary preparations to receive the men and the officers in a

befitting manner. He himself is giving a big ball at the château to which he invites all the village.

Pierrot, sad, morose, and tormented with jealousy, wishes that Line would not accept the invitation, but she wants to amuse herself, and begs him to leave her alone and let her do as she likes. She accepts the invitation.

The soldiers arrive, everyone runs to receive them, and everyone looks happy and welcoming.

The soldiers go to their camp, and the young Captain, whom the Marquis greets warmly, begs that the young men of the village be called whose age for conscription had arrived. They come and proceed to draw their numbers, and Pierrot, who is amongst them, is in a state of fear lest his destiny shall be so fixed that he will have to serve.

The Captain, who has remarked Line's beauty, pays her compliments, and she coquettes with him and gives him a flower.

Pierrot reproaches her with being a flirt, and, fixing his eyes on the Captain, he goes to the urn to draw his number.

Alas! It is Number Seven, the number which destines him to become a soldier.

The Marquis again invites everyone to the fête at the château; the Captain turns to Line and asks if she is coming.

Pierrot entreats her to refuse, but she replies "Yes!"

Everyone goes away bit by bit.

Pierrot, alone and dispirited, watches Line go into her house, and then he turns and casts a look of hate at the Captain, who is receding from the scene. Suddenly he is seized with such a rush of furious jealousy that he begins to think out some means of vengeance. He goes away.

The scene gradually changes to night.

The Captain comes from the château and taps at the door of Line's cottage.

She comes out in a domino.

She accepts the Captain's arm, and together they enter the château.

Pierrot arrives just in time to see them enter, and in a fury he follows them in.

(*The Curtain falls.*)

END OF THE FIRST TABLEAU

SECOND TABLEAU

The scene is laid in a brilliantly lighted ballroom in the house of the Marquis.

The room is full of maskers.

The Marquis and Marquise open the ball with a *gavotte*, and while the dance is in full swing (*passe-pied* and *grand pas d'action*) Pierrot approaches Line, who is with the Captain.

Pierrot entreats her to leave the Captain and come with him.

She, wishing to amuse herself, tells him to leave her alone.

Pierrot furiously threatens that he will create a scandal, but the Captain treats his anger lightly and mocks at him.

Pierrot, unable to control his rage, strikes the Captain.

The shouts and the menaces of the rivals attract the guests, also the Marquis and Marquise, who try to make them keep the peace.

Pierrot leaves the ballroom, followed by the Captain and a few friends.

Line faints in the arms of a neighbour and is tended by the Marquise.

General confusion !

(*The Curtain falls.*)

END OF SECOND TABLEAU

THIRD TABLEAU

The scene is laid in the park of the château, which is seen in the distance illuminated and gay. It is night; the snow is falling.

The château is brightly lighted, one hears the refrain of a waltz ("Loin du Bal").

The snow falls.

Harlequin and Pierrot, followed by several young men in varied styles of fancy dress, come out of the château.

It can easily be seen from their manner and faces that something serious is about to happen.

There must be a duel.

Swords are placed in the hands of Pierrot and the Captain. After a few passes poor Pierrot is mortally wounded and falls, supported by a friend. Tableau

(See the picture by Gérôme, "After the Ball!")

(*The Curtain falls slowly.*)

THE END

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